

'ITALIANITÀ'

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'ITALIANITÀ'

**Debates on Architecture and Design in Milan
1945-1964**

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Abstract

Historian Carl E. Schorske argued in the introduction to his book *Fin-de-siècle Vienna. Politics and culture* (1981) that in most fields of intellectual activity, twentieth-century Europe has proudly asserted its independence from the past. In this thesis, focusing on the period between 1945 - 1964, Schorske's argument will be responded to by demonstrating that the Italian sense of modernity projected itself in a dialogue with history. History was lived experience in the city, home and object and as such served to enrich the language of design and enabled the architect to create new signs out of pre-existing forms and from new relationships between artefacts.

The research looks into this very particular and Italian phenomenon - the creation of an urban culture through a group of magazines, rather than through lived experience of the objects and buildings described. Italian architecture and design was not just about designers creating things, it was also about the 'systems' through which they were represented to the world which suggests that 'italianità' was not identified solely in the object, home and city but in the 'system' in which their meanings floated, and which was at least partially created by the magazines. Design was understood as a concept, a cultural formation prior to materialisation into physical object. The thesis sets up an enquiry into identifying major issues arising in three magazines all published in Milan: *Casabella continuità*, *Domus* and *Stile Industria* in respect to the city, home and object. This provides a framework for a whole set of questions concerning other concepts such as 'italianità', 'modernity', 'memory', 'civiltà', 'identity', 'history', 'culture', 'typology', 'preesistente ambientali', 'universal and contextual values', 'communication' and 'myth'. The early development of many of these conceptions by the Italians greatly influenced 1970s and 1980s thinking about architecture in Europe and America.

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This doctoral thesis is dedicated to my two children Halldór and Sólveig who were yet to arrive when its ideas were formulated but later their presence helped to give them strength.

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Introduction

Historian Carl E. Schorske argued in the introduction to his book, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna. Politics and culture* (1981), that in most fields of intellectual activity, twentieth-century Europe has proudly asserted its independence from the past. Modern architecture, modern music, modern philosophy, and modern science defined themselves not as out of the past, indeed scarcely against the past, but in their independence of the past.¹ The modern mind, he maintained, had been growing indifferent to history because history, conceived as a continuous nourishing tradition, had become useless to it. The attempt to shake off the restraints of history had paradoxically speeded up the processes of history, for indifference to any relationship with the past liberated the imagination to proliferate new forms and new constructs. Thus, he believed, an understanding of the death of history involved a generational rebellion against the fathers and a search for new self-definitions. In this thesis Schorske's argument will be responded to by demonstrating that the Italian sense of modernity projected itself in a dialogue with history. History was embodied in places - the city, home and object - which were humanised by its presence. History was lived experience and as such served to enrich the language of design and enabled the architect to create new signs out of pre-existing forms and from new relationships between artefacts. Understanding history as a building component initiated therefore a series of questions. How were architects to amalgamate the past and present? How could architecture and design create an identity unique to Italy on the international scene? How could architects cultivate 'italianità' as opposed to universal rhetoric and absolute values? Furthermore, how could these disciplines be placed in

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¹ Schorske, C. E. (1981) *Fin-de-siècle Vienna. Politics and culture*. Vintage books edition, New York. First published in 1961.

context to the culture of individual while expressing the collective entity of the city?

The thesis looks into this very particular and Italian phenomenon - the creation of an urban culture through a group of magazines, rather than through the lived experience of the objects and buildings described. It sets up an enquiry into identifying major issues arising in three different magazines: *Casabella continuità* addressing the culture of the city and criteria for urban planning; *Domus* which focuses on the house and the magic qualities of the object which it contains; and *Stile Industria* dedicated to product design and to establish links with industry, edited by the architects Ernesto N. Rogers, Gio Ponti and Alberto Rosselli respectively, and all of them published by Gianni Mazzocchi at Domus Editoriale in Milan. Together their richness of debate was unique and made their significance at home and abroad exceptional. Investigating notions of city, home and object provides a framework for a whole set of questions concerning other concepts such as 'italianità', 'modernity', 'history', 'culture', 'preesistente ambientali', 'memory', 'civiltà', 'identity', 'universal and contextual values', 'communication', and 'myth'. These terms led much of the architectural discussion in Milan without reaching finite definitions. Their meanings will therefore be investigated according to their appropriate context within the magazines.

One reason for choosing to examine this Italian situation lies in the belief that much 1970s and 1980s thinking on architecture in Europe and America where 'context', 'memory', 'history' and 'typology' all featured large, owed a good deal to the earlier development of these concepts by the Italians.

I.

Milan is the principal site of study because of its size and the wealth of its contribution to cultural debate. The conception of this thesis originated in the wish to demonstrate cultural promotion in three different cities that were ruled by distinctive political parties. These were; Milan with the Socialists in power, 'Red' Bologna, and Verona which was ruled by the Christian Democrats. The aim was to define their methods for cultural production and draw out differences and similarities within their political ideology by looking at architecture and urban planning, the arts, literature and cinema taking place and created in these cities. After discussing the subject with specialists in the field both in London and in Italy, they convinced me to concentrate on Milan and its modes of representing its cultural production. Milan was the cultural and industrial capital of Italy and the city where the economic boom centred. With a history of being a centre for military and capital of a commercial and banking empire, and later of Italy's avant-garde, the city also maintained a unique position in terms of industrial production, publishing houses, and

trade. This flow of goods and ideas was reinforced by Milan's closeness to European borders which made the city's international links very strong compared to other Italian cities. In Milan evidence of social and technological change was more visible than anywhere else in Italy, while its wealth in the late 1950s was sustained by the great artisan hinterland north of Milan which turned out almost a third of the national output.² The simultaneous existence of industrial and craft production is particularly relevant to the debate that arose in the early 1950s about how industrial design could integrate arts and crafts in the same product - questions were raised to which how mass production could relate to culture and respond to obsolescence which was so essential to modern industrial economy. Philosophers, intellectual figures and critics living in Milan such as Antonio Banfi, Enzo Paci, Norito Bobbio, Elio Vittorini, Gillo Dorfles and Giulio C. Argan in Rome contributed to the debate about the human environment and were heavily involved in formulating the notion of modernity in architecture and design, bringing sociological ideas from anthropology. Local enlightened patrons and consumers also enriched the city and were perceptive to new thoughts and ideas.

Milan proved therefore one of the most fertile breeding grounds for making connections between 'history' and 'modernity' in the post-war years. Looking for means to overcome alienation and develop cultural sensitivity, intellectuals tried to find a link between the past and the present, when the prevalent political view was that 1945 marked a break with Italy's past. The intellectuals were also keen to establish a collective identity that would be to Italy's advantage in international markets, to encourage design that would call on a sense of 'italianità'. The period between 1945 - 1964, the chronological limits of the thesis, is particularly relevant in that context. During those years, there emerged a stream of ideas and social concepts that affected how architects and consumers perceived national identity. The notion of democracy itself was fiercely debated in Milan. In terms of the architectural project this demanded a revision of thoughts, values, and expressions. Many of the architects (i.e. BBPR, Gio Ponti, Vico Magistretti, Ignazio Gardella, Franco Albini and the Castiglioni brothers) who were working under Fascism before the Second World War had a strong voice in the reconstruction of the country. The conceptual and practical investigations that these architects took on, aimed to find a method and rhetoric rooted in culture and tradition and hence would maintain its value without becoming obsolete. These initial expressions constituted a heritage that would greatly influence the architecture of the 1970s and 1980s such as that of Guido Canella, Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro d'Isola, Aldo Rossi, Gae Aulenti, and Vittorio Gregotti, as well as the writings by Manfredo Tafuri. This initial period of architectural and cultural debate

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² Gregotti, V. 'Italian Design, 1945 - 1971' in Ambasz, E. (ed.) (1972) *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape. Achievements and Problems of Italian Design*. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, p. 324.

was caused to an end in 1964, when Ernesto Rogers was dismissed as the editor of *Casabella continuità*; Alberto Rosselli's *Stile Industria* ceased publication the year before, and thus 1964 is an appropriate point to end the exploration of this subject. Although their ideas remained important, they were reinterpreted in another context within the city, regional planning and avant-gardes in art and architecture. For example, increasing fast communication caused the notion of memory to be revised. This was investigated in the XIII Triennale (1964), and *Edilizia Moderna* (1964) edited by Vittorio Gregotti and was also seen in contrast to the ideas of the American Pop art at the Venice Biennale (1964). Gregotti devoted n. 85 of *Edilizia Moderna* to design. He called in a range of international experts to help explore the boundaries of design which was the theme of the XIII Triennale where was staged a great multimedia show, extraordinarily suggestive and particularly critical of the problem of free time and the consumer society. In this exhibition the system of positions and relations, the heterogeneity and polysemy of materials, and the theatricalization of space all contributed to the construction of a physical environment of particular intensity. The human aspect of design which had called for a conscious relationship between man, artefact, and urbanity, now in 1964, became more abstract and larger in scope embracing the whole of the city and regional planning.

II.

Much has been written about the Italian style and 'la linea italiana' but less about the ideological origin of these concepts or whether it is possible to define their origin. Setting out to search for an answer, it is useful to bear in mind Adrian Forty's conclusion to his book, *Objects of Desire* (1992) where he asserts that "no design works unless it embodies ideas that are held in common by the people for whom the object is intended."³ The thesis then seeks to locate and interpret concepts and artefacts each according to their context and their relation to each other. In that search a great importance is given to theory of design. The Italian architecture and design was not just about designers creating things, it was also about the 'systems' through which they were represented to the world. The architect Ettore Sottsass, recalled that the adrenaline of the immediate post-war years was, for many, poured into the production of hundreds of books and magazine articles reflecting a need to see design as some kind of statement, more than just a physical presence.⁴ Design emerged in Italy as a theoretical as well as a material practice, incorporating ideas from outside its disciplines - from politics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and the arts. The notion of design as a method of communication had already been debated in the pre-war period within magazines such as

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³ Forty, A. (1992) *Objects of Desire. Design and Society since 1750*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 245. First published in 1986.

⁴ Burney, J. (1991) *Ettore Sottsass*. Trefoil Publications, London, p. 19.

Casa bella, (the original title in 1930s for *Casabella continuità*), *Domus*, *Stile* and *Quadrante* in terms of the concept of 'stile'. Arguing that the object expressed a social statement or, an identity, it was argued that its form was not bound to mere shape. Rather design was to be understood as a concept, a cultural formation, prior to materialisation into a physical object. 'Form' was hence, a complex issue and took on different meanings according to the context in which it was seen. It was a conjunction of both outward shape that might signify meaning, and also, an inner idea that precedes the actual shape. The notion of design as a theoretical practice for the physical environment was not restricted only to this period but has continued to the present day to be a vital force within the design practice as a reinforcement to communication and a way of adding to the life of the artefact. In reality, the object or a building, is restricted to a particular physical space (within a shop window, site, or exhibition, etc.), but theory circulates everywhere.

In the post-war years design continued to be linked to political debate, including discussions concerning the problems of reconstruction. A significance was attached to language, and modes of expressions, as was clear in the passage by the writer Cesare Pavese when he described the general feeling at the time, insisting that "we all feel that we live in an age when it is necessary to bring words back to the solid, naked clarity of the time when man first created them for his own use."⁵ A similar point of view was not uncommon in relation to buildings and objects but there were no schools of design in Italy and hence, designers came from other disciplines, namely, architecture and graphic design. Architects were educated in the three-dimensions of the building as well as its accessories. In Germany, England, and America the industrial revolution had already taken place earlier, specialisation of training in various fields of design had already become institutionalised. Italy took advantage of this lack of specialisation in its own design research, which was located in specialised magazines, as well as in La Triennale, in experimental workshops, and the design award Compasso d'oro, all of which were indicative of attempts to solve the problem of linking the different disciplines and experiences, and at same time, to react to the international scene by establishing a particular sense of an Italian identity.

III.

The three magazines, *Casabella continuità*, *Domus* and *Stile Industria*, created a reality of their own, drawing upon elements from the existing world. In this enquiry, they are like windows that are used to look out and into the inter-relationships between cultural products and the built environment and in

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⁵ Quoted from Branzi, A. 'Italian Design and the Complexity of Modernity' in Celant, C. (ed.) (1994) *The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943 - 1968*. Guggenheim Museum, New York, p. 601.

that way, offer a slice of the society itself, that is, its complexity. In the words of Vittorio Gregotti, one of Rogers's disciples:

Either one accepts the idea of attributing everything to a single cause, reducing the role of design to that of a fundamental bearing structure - whether aesthetic, economic, technological, by social class, etc.; or one deals with the historical data by maintaining a precarious balance between the complexity (in the cultural, not the constructional, sense) of the materials involved in designing single objects, and the effort required to organise creatively the new nature made up of these objects that people the 'real' nature they overlay.⁶

The publisher, Gianni Mazzocchi, sensed the appropriate moment for developing ideas and grasped the concepts that were already present in the debate in Milan about architecture and design. His aim as the publisher of a number of magazines that focused on various aspects of human life, was to educate the citizen about his well being and consumer values.⁷ Responding to the intensive debate about the relationship between arts, crafts and industry within the architectural project taking place in Milan, Mazzocchi initiated a magazine devoted entirely to industrial design, namely, *Stile Industria* which was first of its kind in Italy trying to define and promote industrial design by making connections with industry. *Domus* provided the reader with architectural expressions from around the world which was part of its concern of being open to the 'new' and to educate 'good taste'. Furthermore, Gregotti has pointed out that the timing of Rogers's appearance at *Casabella* at the end of 1953 was favourable in terms of influence and inspiration for the younger generation. In an article of 1993 recalling the time with Rogers at *Casabella* continuità, Gregotti reiterated that he had more than once written that Rogers had taught his generation, or even the vast majority of Italian architects, to read and write. This he had done at a period when the level of critical-historical research was weak.⁸ By 'reading and writing' Gregotti paraphrased Rogers belief that theory and practice were together indispensable counterparts to the design process, equal in importance to a knowledge of technology and skills.

Transferred to the content of the magazines, it will be argued that they created 'cultural capital' through which individuals related to each other and society as

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⁶ Gregotti, V. 'Italian design 1945 - 1971' in Ambasz, E. (ed.) *ibid.*, p. 315.

⁷ For further reading see; Mazzocchi, G. (1966) *In difesa dei consumatori e dei risparmiatori*. Editoriale Domus, Milano, and Castiglioni, L.M. (a cura di) (1994) *Gianni Mazzocchi Editore*, Editoriale Domus, Milano.

⁸ Gregotti, V. (1993) 'Rogers e *Casabella*' in Ernesto N. Rogers: *testimonianze e studi*. *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Progettazione dell'Architettura del Politecnico di Milano*. n. 15. Città Studi, Milano, p. 99.

a whole.⁹ Their method of analysis was not limited to reviewing the architectural projects and design products. They created a discourse about the artefact, its form, utility and beauty and its interrelationship with other artefacts and the environment. Things did not carry universal, essential meanings; but their meaning was partially created out of the 'system' in which they belonged, that is, the discourse created by the magazines. The theoretical context of the artefact was therefore equally important to its visual appearance, an interconnectedness of practices that the magazines celebrated.

IV.

The debate on 'Italianità' is analysed in this thesis from the 'city to the spoon', and is divided into three parts. The first two parts, structured around the magazine culture, place theory and practice on an equal footing, while the third part provides conclusions suggesting more theoretical propositions for 'italianità'.

Part 1, 'The city embraces the collective and the singular', observes how *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* (1946 - 1948), *Domus* (1948 - 1964) and *Casabella continuità* (1954 - 1964), particularly, established a method for experiencing, and building within, a city. Rogers saw the necessity for a profound critical rethinking of the principles of international modernism in such a way that history became a structural element rather than a stylistic feature. Interpreting the city's identity and supporting a dialogue between the past and present, his term 'continuità' expressed a commitment to modernisation through the synthesis between tradition and renewal of the pre-existing environment, a concept which was meant to function as a universal methodology. Fusing popular and elite culture into a single function was part of bringing architecture back to human scale and familiar elements in the environment. Respect for different expressions and experiences of individuals, the elements of a local culture and tradition, was considered a building component for the present-future.

Part 2, 'The house is the site where the humanity and the identity of the individual are fostered', enters into the realm of the home and its symbolic value. Analysing *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* edited by Rogers (1946-1947) and Ponti's *Domus* (1948 - 1964), two distinctive versions of the 'home' appear as one of the main themes. Rogers's interest lay in creating and exposing the shared, collective humanity of the individual in the home through terms such as 'la casa dell'uomo' and the culture of the inhabitant. Ponti, conversely, was more concerned with the personal identity of the individual using concepts such as 'civiltà', 'collezionismo' and 'comfort' to describe the atmosphere in the

⁹ For further reading see; Bourdieu, P. (1994) *Distinction. A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London.

home. In both cases, the house was interpreted as an entity and a reflection of man's way of life where the fusion of diverse expressions from the past and contemporaneity converged in a common language intended for integrating the inhabitant with his house. Italian architects reviewed in *Domus* during both Rogers's and Ponti's editorships, were seen to take on the magical properties of the object, its power to prescribe man's conscience, and his cultural and social position.

Having obtained a sense of the city in Part 1 and identified with the culture of the individual in his home in Part 2, Part 3 serves as a conclusion to those investigations, a theoretical explanation for 'italianità'. 'Analysing the 'object' reveals qualities of 'italianità', focuses the subject matter to particular details and concepts of the architectural and design project. Every 'object' had its individual value, identity, and character that should be measured against other elements of its surroundings; such as social setting, objects, colours, forms and materials. Gaining a complete equilibrium between man and the artefact was therefore desired because design was considered part of a social vision. It was a political one in the sense that the designed 'object' (whether physical, conceptual or as an idea on the drawing board) made a statement about life. When producing a sketch for a product or a piece of furniture designers were creating and communicating a social and an intellectual idea, their designs represented something more than physical objects. The drawing was a medium for expression, where the artist gathered together ethics, technology and nature in the most transparent manner so as to appeal to 'all'. Part 3 then looks at *Domus*, *Casabella continuità* and *Stile Industria* in order to recognise the basic themes through which Italian architects interpreted an 'object': a thing itself, part of larger concept, and a signification of something else. Designing an 'object' comprised a cultural discourse about national identity but before reaching that point the user had to perceive the course of the design process which incorporated questions of modernity, 'taste' versus social purpose, tradition versus novelty, nationality versus universality, a discourse about objects versus actual objects, 'signification' versus 'objecthood', craft production versus mass production, the 'author' versus anonymous design. Decoded and interpreted in the magazines, the 'object' signified that 'italianità' was a conceptual idea that demanded a conscious effort to be understood - in its interrelationships and dialogues, and in the integration of popular and elite culture. In this way, the 'object' made a link between the collective life and the individual and established a myth about 'italianità'. 'Italianità' which was not solely constituted by the object itself or by the city, but in the 'system' in which their meanings floated, and which was at least partially created by the magazines.

Part 1

The city embraces the collective and the singular

1.1

'Culture' as a building component

Towards the end of the war, a group of Milanese architects - among others Franco Albini, Piero Bottoni, Ignazio Gardella, Gabriele Mucchi, Enrico Peressutti, Mario Pucci, Aldo Putelli and at the very beginning, Giangi Banfi, Lodovico Belgiojoso and Ernesto Rogers - worked in secrecy on a general plan for Milan, Plan A.R., which stood for 'Architetti Reuniti', (reunited architects). Confronting the destructive results of the Second World War, architects felt the need to unite their strength and speculate on the present and future structure of the city, extending their scope to the entire country. They were active in debating the most pressing demands presented by the drastic conditions in which Italy found itself and which led to an overall rethinking of previous positions. Within architectural practice, efforts were made to find identity for the collective labour of the Italian people as they struggled to overcome the tragedies of dictatorship and war. Rural peculiarities were respected and indeed took part in the architectural language which led to a rejection of anything ostentatious, whether technological or structural, or even with respect to the canons of modern tradition.¹ In their rendering of human life, architects felt close to the ideological concept of the 'nuovo umanesimo' (new humanism) which the left-wing periodical *Il Politecnico* proposed. An anticipation of this 'new humanism' was bound up with the intellect of the individual and would help in creating a democratic society. Everyone should

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¹ For a reading on the notion of continuity from pre-war to post-war condition, see: Castronovo, V. (ed) (1976) *L'Italian Contemporanea 1945-75*,. Torino. Sassoon, D. (1986) *Contemporary Italy. Politics, Economy & Society since 1945*. Longman, London and New York. Doordan, D. 'Rebuilding the House of Man' in Celant, G. (ed.) (1994) *Italian Metamorphosis, 1943 -1968*. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

feel the need to participate in that formation actively, holding a knowledge from a wide spectrum and together they would create 'nuova cultura' (a new culture).

This perception of the architect, as being able to enter every sector of the man-made society while holding a wide knowledge about the nature of urban life, has in Italy continued to be held in architectural thinking up to the present, despite increasing specialisation within related disciplines. When Gregotti was the editor of *Casabella* in the 1980's, he made the relationship between design and architecture one of the themes of the magazine. This he did by making a parallel reference to the methodological unity expressed by the Modern Movement and the slogan "from the tea-spoon to the city" and opened up a debate through the confrontation of widely diverging descriptions: from the architect to the art historian, from the designer to the philosopher of science.² In the context of post-war Milan with its relatively easy access to publishers and editors of respected magazines, it has been one of the hallmarks of the architectural practice that a building was not limited to its site. Theory and the written word were considered equally important testing culture as part of the urban experience, and how it was perceived and projected.

1.1.1

'Una casa a ciascuno'

The AR Plan envisaged a system of structuring axes for rapid traffic - both urban and connecting with the hinterland - rupturing the monocentricism of the city and creating a new administrative centre at the intersection of its two main axes. This allowed the use of the old city centre section for residential purposes through the removal of most of the industrial and service activities which, with their load of traffic and need for parking lots and new areas for expansion, would have inevitably destroyed the oldest part of the city. The centre of the city would remain essentially residential, retaining a part of the city's cultural activities (museums, theatres, La Scala, Il Duomo, etc.), which would best fit into the morphology of the pre-existing urban texture. Furthermore, the AR plan rejected the idea of the unlimited growth of the city - as a continual oil spill. The maximum population forecast was 800,000 city inhabitants with another 200,000 in the outer ribbons. It established a population threshold, foreseeing new settlements or, 'new towns'. These were connected to the villages and small cities of the hinterland where, along with residential areas which included facilities of social and collective activities, it envisioned an industrial sector for new enterprises as well as for those displaced from the city centre. This allowed a greater continuity between

² See: 'Abitacolo e Abitazione' (cabs and Houses) dibattito tra T. Buddensieg, F. Dal Co, P. Fossati, V. Gregotti, J. Guillerme, R. Piano e M. Scolari in *Casabella* n. 484, 1982, pp. 14 -24.

residential and industrial settlements and avoided the necessity for commuting. A rapid transport system (the structuring axes, subways, etc.) was to connect the 'new towns' and the old city centre. Milan was, in other words, considered an articulate city-region rather than a large metropolis. As explicitly stated in the report which explained the proposal, the plan aspired to an ethical order that would invest town planning with the task of "organizing a given local area with the goal of equally distributing work, and therefore goods and wealth".³ Inevitably, many of the measures the plan put forward presupposed an economic policy capable of limiting, or at least subordinating, the prerogatives of landed property to the general interest. In reality, things would go differently. In the plan's successive versions, real estate interests ended up predominating over both the requirements of planned reconstruction and the city's regional and polycentric vocation.

The periodical, *Il Politecnico*, one which was devoted to 'contemporary culture', published the A.R. proposal of 1945. [fig. 1] It set out the aims and priorities of this plan for Milan and explained the nature of a general plan. One of the main goals of the A.R. plan that *Il Politecnico* heralded was the decentralisation of industry as it would improve living conditions for the whole of the class structure. The life of the citizen would be free from industrial pollution and heavy traffic load. The creation of residential zones connected to the factory would provide the worker with a life infinitely better to his life in the city - clean air, detached housing with gardens and vegetable gardens, schools, cinemas, sport grounds and public leisure centres.⁴ At the same time, the article acknowledged the vast problems of the day and insisted that they would not be resolved unless everybody collaborated, and, in this way *Il Politecnico* called for responses and the exposure of different views regardless of class or position. All citizens had the right to speak up about their concerns because in the end, the citizens themselves - those who lived in the city/neighbourhood - were the real clients of the project/plan. The inclusion of this article was part of *Il Politecnico*'s conception for the 'new humanism' and a wish to extend the general knowledge of the reader. Knowledge was the main drive in correlating events and disciplines and hence, in order to express himself and to respond with constructive thinking, the reader had to be provided with thorough information. The periodical advocated an ideology for the global, not subdivided, man.⁵ This was already clear in the first editorial by Elio Vittorini, 'Una nuova cultura', where he wrote,

³ For more information see, Gardella, I. 'The Fifty Years of Italian Architecture Reflected in the Eye of an Architect' in *Ignazio Gardella*. Exhibition and Catalogue curated by Fabio Nonis, Sergio Boidi. Harvard University, Graduate School of Design, 1986. Electa International. p. 13.

⁴ 'Piano A.R.' in *Il Politecnico* n. 3, 13 Ottobre, 1945, p. 1, continues on page 4.

⁵ For a summary of aims see the introductory pamphlet, 'Notizie su *Il Politecnico*' included in *Il Politecnico*. Scheda bibliografica Einaudi. 2 dicembre 1989, Einaudi, Torino.

... it is no more culture that consoles the state of suffering, but a culture that projects from suffering, that fights it and eliminates it.⁶

The new cultural policy presented itself as an alternative to the old myths and cultural values. Its aim was to become the spokesman of new proposals and alternatives which would lead to new values. *Il Politecnico* considered Western culture up to the Second World War as having been inactive; and as such the true cause of the war. Instead of an imposed culture, of either the Church or the Regime, one could sense a beginning of a new culture which was initiated and nourished by the individual and for him collectively. Vittorini explained;

... if culture almost never has been able to influence their affairs, then men depend solely on the way in which culture is manifested. It has predicated, has taught, has elaborated on the principles and values, has discovered continents and constructed machines, but it has not identified itself with society. It has not dominated in the society. It has not commanded armed forces for the society. To whom has culture given its motives for elaborating on its principles and values? It has given a spectacle of human suffering in society. Man has suffered in society, man suffers. And what does culture do for a man who suffers? It looks for a consolation...⁷

The culture that consoled from the state of suffering was, according to Vittorini, the Catholic Church. Up to this moment in 1945, he continued, the society had been based on religious morals which were like opium to the masses. It made them dis-interested in starting a revolution and ignored the call for a change. The Church taught that what one does in this life is to one's benefit in the afterlife, which in turn is promised to be a better life. In order to achieve the 'new' culture that *Il Politecnico* proposed, Vittorini emphasised that it was important to take an active part in one's present life, as there would be no other life. People had to be conscious and, at the same time, receptive. Culture therefore had to be brought to them:

Should, or should not, culture take part in the regeneration of the society? We believe that culture must take an active and direct part in the regeneration of the society. As society is not able to regenerate on its own accord from the grassroots of the working class, we think that culture, by really participating in the regeneration of the society, must immerse itself with the working class, forming their aspirations exactly in accordance to their spirit of renovation.⁸

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⁶ Vittorini, E. 'Una nuova cultura' in *Il Politecnico* n. 1, 29 Settembre, 1945, p. 1.

⁷ Vittorini, E. 'Una nuova cultura' *ibid.* p. 1.

⁸ Vittorini, E. 'Il Politecnico' in *Il Politecnico* n. 2, 6 Ottobre, 1945, p. 2.

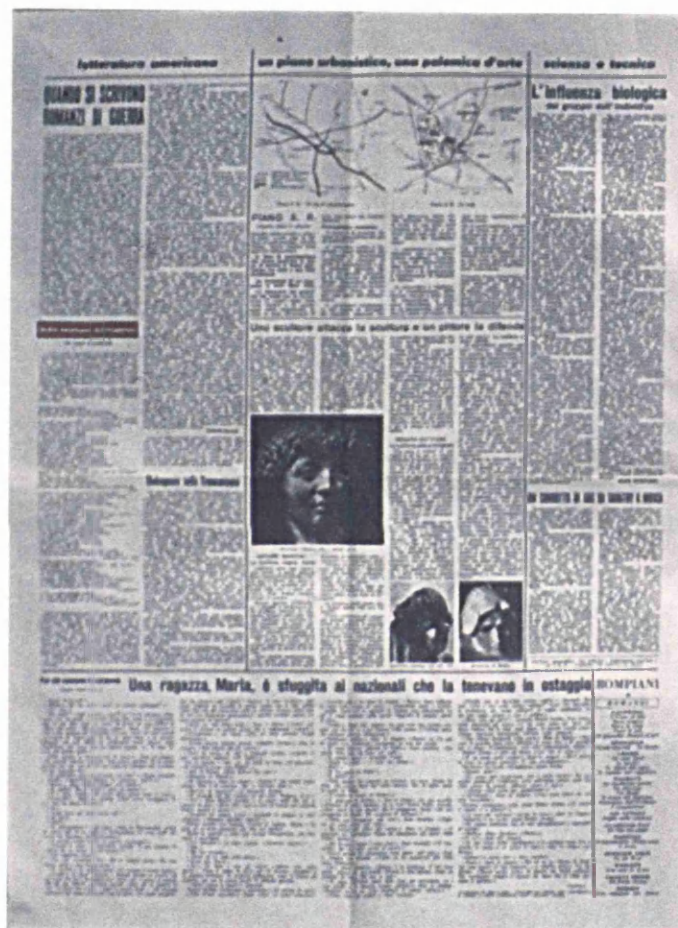


Fig. 1.- A.R. proposal for general plan of Milan, // *Politecnico* n.3 (1945).
The plan shows the connections and relationships between different quarters of the city.

The magazine believed in the necessity for man to be open to experiences, know how to observe and be self-critical and above all, know how to learn from experience with sufficient critical modesty. This attitude was called 'modern humanism'. The humanistic school that aimed to form a man with this attitude was a democratic school, open, progressive and the school of the masses.⁹ People could no longer be protected by religion, they must take up a conscious political stand.

This vision for new principles for society was in contrast to what Gio Ponti believed to be elements that provided people with strength. He had formed the magazine *Stile* as a result of having left *Domus* around 1940 and edited the magazine from 1941 to 1947 by maintaining the character of *Domus* which he had founded in 1928. In *Stile* he voiced his views about themes of the time by focusing on the arts, architects and war. He specifically represented Italy as the mother of the people who embraced tradition, culture and religious beliefs and from which the future of the country would be established. This was illustrated most clearly in the front covers where Italy was seen held in two hands, fragile and delicate while containing an inner strength that would be built upon. Ponti himself designed and finished these images as works of art. He always stressed that an architect should also be a painter and an artist, similar to how Le Corbusier projected himself. The front cover of the first issue of 1945 showed a flat hand where there was a cubic house with three windows and door, painted in yellow, with the inscription at the top and bottom - "casa a tutti". It was symbolic of one's life which depended on working hands and, that one's past was inscribed in those hands expressing achievements and suffering. The qualities of the Italian people were, in other words, an inherited condition, according to Ponti. It was marked in the palm of their hands. Carrying that experience, the hands would build Italy's future because it was as natural for the human family to have a house as it was for the birds to make a nest. With the housing shortage of 1945 Ponti stressed that family issues were central to the reconstruction programme, to have security of housing where the mother would return to take her place at home caring for the children, health, and wages which together would guarantee family unity and moral upbringing.¹⁰ The family was the unity which embraced the individual just as the Catholic church embraced the whole of society. Through the front cover of the sixth issue of *Stile* in 1945, Ponti wrote about his interpretation of humanity through the unity of the family. The illustration depicted a naked couple holding hands in an enclosed space painted red. They

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⁹ This is particularly clear in the article by Giulio Preti 'Scuola umanistica o scuola tecnica?' in *Il Politecnico* n. 11, 8 Dicembre, 1945, p. 1.

¹⁰ Ponti, G. 'Gli interessi di esistenza di produzione di esportazione degli italiani sono più agricoli che industriali. La casa rurale è in Italia il termine prevalente della "casa a tutti"' in *Stile, architettura arti arredamento. Rivista per la ricostruzione e per la casa di domani*. Anno 1945 n. 1. Garzanti - Editore - Milano - Spedizione in abbonamento postale - Gruppo III Milano, p. VII.

appeared as if in a womb. The couple looked straight out of the presentation ignoring a group of people that were adjacent to the 'womb', disfigured and un-identified. In explaining this cover Ponti argued that it was possible to establish a truly civilised life for everybody. This would be achieved by obtaining welfare and education for mothers, children's welfare, education for all about hygiene and cleanliness, the return of mothers to the homes away from work and the office, with sunny, adequate and clean housing for everybody. With the bestowal of an adequate and healthy life, along with adequate clothing for all seasons - extreme care with ventilation, lighting and heating of the work environment had to be provided to ensure perfect hygiene for those who worked. Furthermore, schools would have to be placed in open and spacious gardens, and be furnished with hygiene in mind. Everyone should be able to experience the benefits of all seasons, by annually sending all children to enjoy the sea and mountains and by promoting sport and tourism. Urban planning should de-centralise industry and harbours from green areas in order to give gardens to the city. If life would materialise in such a way, in respect to social civilisation, the human race would become beautiful and perfect after two generations. The beauty of nature would express itself to every creature alike. The 'civiltà' of everyone's social life would bring humanity to beauty.¹¹ Understood as such, humanity was tied to the health of the body and soul rather than an ideology, intellectual activity or establishing a dialogue of relationships between parts and the whole.

Not tied to political ideologies, Ponti's thought was a political and sentimental based upon religion which is not an ideology but a belief. Transferring the rhetoric to architecture, he used the same purity of description for architecture as in religion. Architecture was an art that would be raised to the state of transparency and beauty. Ponti insisted in his book, *L'architettura è un cristallo* (1945):

Architecture is a crystal. Pure architecture is a crystal. When it is pure, it is pure like a crystal, magic, closed, exclusive, autonomous, uncontaminated, uncorrupted, absolute, definite like a crystal. It is a cube, it is a parallelepiped, it is a pyramid, it is an oblique, it is a tower: closed forms that exist.

We reject curved forms because they do not have an end. The sphere, infinite form, can never be architecture. It can never be rolling; neither with a beginning nor an end. Architecture begins and ends.¹²

¹¹ Ponti, G. 'Che cosa significa la nostra copertina?' in *Stile. architettura arti arredamento. Rivista per la ricostruzione e per la casa di domani*. n. 6, 1945. Garzanti Editore, Milano. No page number.

¹² Ponti, G. (1945) *L'architettura è un cristallo. Poetica dell'architettura*. Collana diretta da Riccardo Ricas. III. Editrice Italiana, Milano, pp. 13 - 14.

The house was seen as a pure form and became an autonomous piece of work owned by the bourgeois. It became admired for its individuality rather than being part of the collective and hence its communicative value was not expressed in a dialogue but as an individual statement about itself. This attitude was in contrast to the rationalist rhetoric that stressed the need for an urban planning dealing with interrelationship between houses and dwellings. The appeal for a language of architecture that could address every social class was omitted. For Ponti, a sense of urban affinity and shared communication was subject to individual disposition rather than an architectural formula.

To solve the vast problem of reconstruction in collective terms was, however, a main concern of the A.R. plan and realising the significance of the plan it was published in *Il Politecnico*, as a reminder of the ideological commitment of participation. The study of urban planning was a way of finding a common identity for the masses after the destruction of the war. Ernesto N. Rogers, one of the authors of the plan, reinforced this subject in the fourth issue of *Il Politecnico* in the article 'Una casa a ciascuno', stressing the urgent need for housing and that everyone had to be conscious of that necessity. With the individual problem of town planning, defined by Rogers as "the science of constructing a community, organising and stabilising the relationship between one house and another within the urban fabric," the house always becomes more of a collective problem.¹³ Town planning tried to build up an environment for the citizens where they could correlate to each other and have an identity. Architects would have to make use of popular culture, without showing pretentious display of wealth.

In the same article, Rogers reiterated that in 1945 Italy, the problem of housing was at the centre of politics. The importance of architecture, throughout its history, had been rooted in its monuments and palaces. Now times had changed, wrote Rogers, there would be less decoration and more in accordance with necessity. The mentality of people and social conditions had also changed which made it possible to concentrate on a new typology of housing.¹⁴ With the Modern Movement, housing for the lower classes became significant in terms of a way of life and urban design. Throughout the centuries, architecture had gained a particular power in connection with the church and palace. Modern architecture, on the contrary, took the dwelling as its point of departure. Architecture was conceived as growing out of daily life, as an expression of man's understanding of nature, of other men and of himself. A building represented something man must achieve in his own life. Responding to this Modernist call, a new client had been created to whom Rogers gave special attention with regards to his social needs. Importantly, there had to be a reciprocal trust between the client and the architect. The architect, with his humanistic knowledge, was a prophet able to foresee the

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¹³ Rogers, E.N. 'Una casa a ciascuno' in *Il Politecnico* n. 4, 20 ottobre, 1945, p. 3.

¹⁴ Rogers, E. N. 'Una casa a ciascuno' *ibid.* p. 3.

future. With his broad vision he would attempt to solve the housing problem and the social, economic and political situation to which it was bound. Everyone throughout the social scale needed an accommodation and hence every member of society had to believe in the project and understand its ethics, including the rich. At the end of the article, Rogers asked for support from everybody;

We ask for understanding from the rich to recognise the new need to give housing to all - or as Giangi Banfi phrased it better - "a house for everybody". ...*The problem of housing is at the centre of politics. Everybody must fund it, like with bread, in peace and in war.*¹⁵ [Rogers's italics]

The Italian architects who were committed to modern architecture had become convinced that social and economic requirements did not necessarily demand mathematical solutions, and that architectural space was related to life rather than dictated by geometry. These were rationalist architects whose original group, Gruppo 7, came to the scene in 1926 and included Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Carlo Enrico Rava, Gino Pollini, Giuseppe Terragni, and Ubaldo Castagnoli who left the group and was replaced in 1927 with Alberto Libera. As a group they survived only 5 years, but in that time succeeded in introducing a modern architectural idiom in Italy. Rationalist architects realised that the fundamental principles of rationalism were not necessarily adapted to a rigid urban architectural idiom similar to that formulated by leaders of European modernism like Gropius and Le Corbusier. They saw that these same leaders had modified their original attitude and were seeking more flexibility in design, greater freedom in planning and increased plasticity of form. Moreover, they recognised that the work of great artists such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Alvar Aalto had contributed towards a development of the formalistic style along the lines of greater freedom and they felt a need to broaden the historical basis of their experiments and to enlarge the horizon of their originally 'European' ideals. Above all, they realised that architectural rationalism, like all rationalist experiments, was not a set formula but a living language, always undergoing modification. In other words, that it was 'rationalist' logic which continually changed the form of 'rationalism'. Its legacy, going back to the architect Giuseppe Pagano and the critic Eduardo Persico during the inter-war years, called upon the social function of the architect. The rigour of form would, almost by empathy, bring rigour of behaviour and the ethical quality they desired.¹⁶ In May 1929, Adalberto Libera, speaking on behalf of the rationalists, had replied to Giovanni Piacentini's criticisms in an article in *Rassegna Italiana*. Piacentini,

¹⁵ Rogers, E. N. 'Una casa a ciascuno' *ibid.* p. 3.

¹⁶ Rykwert, J. 'The Modern Movement in Italian Architecture' in *The Necessity of Artifice*. Academy Editions. London. 1982. p. 19. For further reading see; Argan, G. C. 'Modern architecture in Italy' in *Italian Contemporary Architecture*. An exhibition prepared by the Italian CIAM Group. Royal Institute of British Architects, London, 1952.

who was the official architect of the Fascist Regime, had condemned the use of concrete and the forms that the rationalists adopted from the architects of the Modern Movement and argued that they were irrational in their southern climate. To this statement, Libera made clear how the group interpreted the word 'rational'. Rationalism, he explained, depended upon a dualistic concept of architecture. In addition to the traditional Crocean understanding of architecture as a form of artistic expression springing from the creative intuition for the artist-architect, specific material circumstances conditioned architectural expression. Thus architectural evaluation required the development of a set of criteria that took into account techno-structural as well as aesthetic factors. The rationalists never meant to deny the importance of aesthetic values, nor did they wish to confine architecture to the material concerns of structure and technique. They wanted to expand the aspects of architecture to a far greater degree than was customary in Italy at that time. A building that satisfied the economic and technical aspects of a programme without expressing the new spirit of the modern age was not a rationalist building neither was a building that only expressed a modern aesthetic sensibility. In concluding his reply, Libera emphasised that a rationalist building would integrate into the historic fabric of urban Italy. The city was itself the product of a long series of juxtapositions of the old and the new. The rationalist architecture would take its place among other architectural styles the way the Baroque, the Renaissance, and the Gothic had in their time in assuming their positions among the monuments of earlier eras.¹⁷

Libera's criticism defending rationalism is an important indication of 'continuità' within the Italian modern movement. Significantly, it preceded Ernesto Rogers's subtitle for *Casabella* in 1954 and the debate about integration of the 'new' and the 'old' that became an important legacy in the post-war period. The central argument of this integration was based on a progression to modernity in its relation to tradition and the pre-existing environment ('preesistente ambientali'). The conventions of the past were inadequate to meet the challenges of the present. Interpreting Libera's dualistic concept of architecture - to maintain an artistic expression whilst incorporating economic and technical aspects into the design - meant that the search for a contemporary architectural identity became expressed in 'the synthesis between utility and beauty' (a phrase that the philosopher, Enzo Paci and Ernesto Rogers would employ in the post-war *Casabella continuità*). As well as being a technician, the architect was an artist who maintained sensitivity to the aesthetic form. This awareness of the artist continuously re-appeared in the discussion on the architect, not only during the Fascist regime but it went much further back to the Renaissance period when the artist/architect held a humanist role.

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¹⁷ Cited from Doordan, D. (1988) *Building Modern Italy. Italian Architecture 1914-1936*. Princeton Architectural Press, New York, p. 74.

Architectural rationalism, thereby appeared as a great ideal and a means for a peaceful, ordered change in the social structure. Before the war, it had placed its hopes in the enlightened tradition and the progressive European middle-class. In the light of post-war re-construction and with the focus of the city as a collective entity and consisting of mixed social groups, the language of architecture had to be questioned, precisely because of its wish to address all people, to make 'a house for everybody'. It had to use a rhetoric of 'new humanism' and a democratic way of communication for either a compromise had to be accepted or a wholesale revision of its historical and theoretical basis be undertaken. However, it was not until Ernesto Rogers became *Domus*'s editor that those questions were tested for their capacity of communication.

1.1.2

'Dall'oggetto d'uso alla città'

When Rogers took over as the editor of *Domus* in 1946, - from 1941 to 1945, the magazine had been directed by Melchiorre Bega, Massimo Bontempelli and Giuseppe Pagano - he was anxious to restore the rationalist language and make it take on moral, utilitarian and democratic aims. This was articulated in the idea of the rational mass production of standardised units, both in architectural construction and the manufacture of domestic items. The publisher of *Domus Editoriale*, Gianni Mazzocchi had considered it no longer feasible to keep Ponti as its editor immediately after the war as he had been too involved with Fascism.¹⁸ An example of Ponti's rhetoric is an article in *Domus* n. 155 in 1940 where he praised Mussolini for his achievements of being able to elevate 'Italian' architecture and provide architects with immense opportunities unequalled elsewhere. While America, France and England regarded exhibitions as great 'fiera', the Italians immediately had a feeling for having created a new city e.g. the Universal Exhibition in Rome which expressed the glory and victory of the Italian people. Italy sensed its glorious and victorious history, past and of the present, from which new and great deeds of 'civiltà' would spring and she would want to express in architecture, of Italian style. Rogers had been one of the rationalists who had designed and proposed modern architecture for the Fascist Regime, but in the fear of being prosecuted for his Jewish background he contributed to *Casabella* with nine articles, signed 'unanimous' from February 1941 to

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¹⁸ This is based on a conversation between the author of this thesis and the artist and critic, Gillo Dorfles, and, on another occasion with the architect Vittorio Gregotti, both in April 1996. No written evidence is available for this statement but judging from the political situation at the time, it was not acceptable to have been actively associated with the Fascist Regime. Joseph Rykwert confirmed (in a letter to the present author dated from the 20 th January, 1997) that after the war, Ponti "was sufficiently tainted by the 'ventennio' for Mazzocchi to want an editor identified with Resistance and the Partito d'Azione."

August 1942 and escaped to Switzerland in 1943.¹⁹ There he formulated his ideas about the need to form a society building upon, and built for, humanity. The problem of a house was at the core of all housing solutions which side by side configured an organic centre: house, square, countryside and a city. This was not an utopia, nor a city of the sun, or a city of God, it was the city of man.²⁰ When he had the opportunity to voice his beliefs in *Domus* in 1946, Rogers developed his ideas within the context of the destruction of homes and the need to rebuild a society, in both a physical and cultural sense, and thereby felt the need to add 'la casa dell'uomo' (the house of man) to the title. He emphasised links with tradition and stressed the essential humanism of his programme.²¹ His aims centred on the need to give the architectural problem its 'proper' context within the specific cultural, social and economic issues of the day which meant that *Domus's* index featured articles by well known critics on abstract art, cinema, music, contemporary painting, and literature. In his first editorial in 1946, Rogers set out the objective of the magazine:

It is a matter of forming a style, a technique, a morality as terms of a single function. It is a matter of building a society... No problem is solved if it does not at once respond to utility, morals and, aesthetics.²²

Ideally the client and the architect worked together within their consciousness and conscientiousness, looking for new means of representing the meeting point between traditional culture and the new democratic city. Rogers foresaw that this change would be slow and demanded that people would not lose faith in the reconstruction. By referring to Goethe he argued "that *we are often compelled to give up what is good to save what is better*."²³ [Rogers's italics] Participation had to be valued as such because whether or not one's actions achieved perfection, they were part of it and contributed to its realisation. Rogers demonstrated the need to build and act with hope and integrity for all classes of society. The city was a collective place of mixed classes. The

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¹⁹ Bonfanti, E. and Porta, M. (1973) *Città, Museo e Architettura*. IL Gruppo BBPR nella cultura architettonica italiana 1932 - 1970. Vallecchi, Firenze. Footnote n. 17, p. 80.

²⁰ Rogers, E. N. 'Architetto in me' first published in *Dagmerselle*, Lausanne nov. 1943. Here it is taken from *L'architettura, cronica e storia* 205. Anno XVIII n. 7, novembre 1972. Direttore Bruno Zevi, Roma. Numero speciale dedicato ad Ernesto Nathan Rogers nel terzo anniversario della morte.

²¹ The architectural historian Siegfried Giedion had already emphasised the importance of history and sense for 'continuum' in his book, *Space Time and Architecture* in 1941 although his terminology was highly abstract and undefined: "For planning of any sort our knowledge must go beyond the state of affairs that actually prevails. To plan we must know what has gone on in the past and feel what is coming in the future. This is not an invitation to prophecy but a demand for a universal outlook upon the world." Giedion, S. (1982) *Space, Time and Architecture. The growth of a new tradition*. Cambridge, Massachusetts. Harvard University Press, Fifth edition, revised and enlarged 1967, p. 7. First published in 1941.

²² Rogers, E. N. 'Programma: Domus, la casa dell'uomo' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 205, 1946, p. 1.

²³ Rogers, E. N. 'Casa reale e casa ideale' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 209, 1946, p. 2.

yearning of the modern architect was to influence life in all its aspects through his proposals, from the most common household utensil to the whole of city's urban planning. Designing meant to be engaged in politics and to help to solve social problems. Architecture, in other words, aimed at a synthesis and equilibrium.²⁴

In the first issue in 1946, *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* projected dwellings specially designed for a worker, a bourgeois, an extended family, a married couple with a studio for an architect/designer and a room for an aunt, and a three bedroom flat-share. As well, there was a note on a pre-fabricated house and an article making a comparison between the 'human' house and the 'geometrical' one. In the issue n. 208, articles appeared on the English house, a bachelor flat, a flat for a doctor, and a flat for a professional. The issue number 211 gave solutions to flats for one, two, three, and four people thanks to the flexibility of pre-fabrication and space economy. The assigned task of the architect remained to have an overall view of society and its basic need for the private and public sectors. As Rogers argued in the editorial, 'Ricostruzione: dall'oggetto d'uso alla città' in 1946, man lay at the centre of the universe, between the atom and the stars.²⁵ The problem of 'the house of man' was at the centre of our lives and, more specifically in the field of technical ability, it was the corner stone between the smallest object of utility and the largest urban systems (community centres and national planning). The duty of our time appeared in re-conquering the conscientiousness of human measure. This would define the standard for re-establishing all other relationships. [fig. 2a,b] To give a further meaning to this ideology, Rogers extended the 'famous slogan', 'from the spoon to the city'.²⁶ The world around man was made out of artefacts. It was the role of the architect to orchestrate and transform each formal representation of existence. For a unitary reconstruction to get under way, from the smallest object of utility to the vastest urban problem, it followed that it had to be regulated with a method that safeguarded the freedom of the individual while taking social justice into account. This was a theory that Rogers hoped not to be an abstraction but a modest contribution to the solution of practical problems. The seed which was already sprouting, he concluded in his article 'Ricostruzione, dall'oggetto d'uso alla Città', made itself an integral part of the future. Rogers recognised that

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²⁴ For further reading see; Eco, U. (1994) *Apocalypse Postponed*. R. Lumley (ed.) London. Particularly chapter 1 'Phenomena of This Sort Must Also be Included in Any Panorama of Italian Design' where he questions the utopian dream of the post-war designers in Italy.

²⁵ Rogers, E.N. 'Ricostruzione: dall'oggetto d'uso alla Città' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 215, 1946.

²⁶ In the editorial, 'Dal cucchiaino alla forchetta' in *Casabella* n. 496, 1983, Vittorio Gregotti maintained that this was not an original phrase made by Rogers, but this motto had been articulated by Hermann Muthesius. There was no further reference, however, for Muthesius's supposed date or context in which he was speaking. Another reference for the origin of this phrase comes from Manfredo Tafuri in an interview with Pietro Corsi in *Casabella* n. 619-620, 1995: "... Walter Gropius, whose motto as everyone knows was "From the spoon to the city." (p. 147)

Fig. 2a.- 'Ricostruzione: dall'oggetto d'uso alla città' *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 215 (1946).
A relationship is established between nature and man, and between individuals and the masses.



una rivista stessa per ora quelli dove si rischia grande quantità di produzione per aspettare ai tempi giusti, anche perché se si dice che si può ripetere industrialmente un'opera d'arte moderna, bisogna sapere che si può ripetere un'opera d'arte. Ma chi, è bene precisare che se la copia prodotta in serie dall'industria o dall'artigianato, dà lo stesso semplice prodotto da quanto siamo, richiama una sensazione unitaria che esclude per ciascuno di rapporto familiare tra artista e bellezza.

Acquistare dunque sempre più valore nella nostra moderna la figura dell'architetto e quella degli altri componenti della grande industria che è chiamata a trasformare in partito come ogni rappresentazione formale dell'industria: del macchina alla città.

Non sentiamo tutti che la vita della civiltà, ma anche il suo impermanente, trasforma il nostro destino e impedisce la nostra responsabilità di uomini, di lavoratori, di artisti. E sappiamo perciò che la vita dell'uomo si trasforma davanti alla nostra in cui noi stesso perfezioniamo la nostra coscienza, il nostro senso, la nostra arte.

Il tema — ricorda Cavali — è al centro del rapporto tra l'uomo e le stelle: il problema della vita dell'uomo è al centro della nostra vita e nel campo spirituale della nostra vita prima ancora, è il fulcro tra i più piccoli oggetti d'uso e i più vasti complessi urbanistici (comunità umane e piani centrali).

Il compito della nostra opera pare che sia di interpretare la coscienza della nostra arte: questa è la prima delle nostre responsabilità: quella di creare per stabilire tutti gli altri rapporti.

Ecco il fenomeno: è un tentativo di creare un'architettura e il materialismo che ha fatto diventare la cultura per tutto un secolo, ma la sua voglia verso natura nel campo tecnico della ricerca.

Quando nella storia della nostra civiltà moderna, possiamo avere qualche altra conferma del rinnovarsi dei rapporti tra noi e gli oggetti riguardando la questione del punto di vista economico e sociale della produzione.

È una sfida, insomma, che le attività quotidiane, mentre producono ricchezza, non è solo un'attività, ma è un'attività che bisogna tener conto di questa nel processo architettonico dove si rinnovano continuamente i diversi aspetti dell'industria.

Le piante presenti della piramide non sono forse un simbolo della «struttura degli edifici»?

Ma anche il motivo è il materiale ideale per un'attività a lungo ciclo produttivo e a basso costo.

Sul perfezionamento ora il nuovo modello della costruzione nei tempi per mettere questo del nostro che è il nostro senso: multiplo, rappresentativo, dalla natura della mano dell'uomo e stiamo cercando il nuovo modello nel massimo comune dividere che, con l'aiuto della macchina, ci consente di creare segmenti architettonici ripetitivi della personalità individuale e flessibili a tutte le variazioni necessarie al nostro senso.

Le questi termini la ricerca per il tipo di razionalizzazione e di perfezionamento appare in alcuni casi per diventare realmente un controllo continuo possibile di tutti i nostri fatti.

Non sembra difficile i costi di produzione degli oggetti dell'architettura non sfiorando il lavoro di una parte degli uomini, ma naturalmente a profitto di tutti, i tratti del progetto: natura una nuova attività, offre impieghi creativi alla fantasia degli artisti.

Il tema che gli artisti nella storia del nuovo modello possono avere di natura opposta: da un lato può essere ancora troppo piccolo e poco troppo indifferente per gli altri aspetti — come appunto è il motivo: dall'altro, può essere troppo grande, limitando le possibilità delle costruzioni. Il primo errore dipende da una libertà indifferente, il secondo da un principio rigidamente igienico.

È l'atto e l'altro conclusioni l'unità e la bellezza.

Così il nostro ragionamento che parte da considerazioni generali, trova riferimento e

si svolge nell'osservazione del particolare: nel nucleo della costruzione.

È così potuto contare le altre esigenze e ci sono qualche cosa della razionalizzazione industriale, ma la prodotta impone il tema del nostro lavoro in generale con la speranza che la teoria non sia un'astrazione ma un simbolo concreto alla soluzione pratica del problema.

Non che siamo contenti ogni giorno nell'attività della professione e ricominciare il compimento della vita non dobbiamo tuttavia lasciarsi prendere, tempi della contingenza o accettare spiritualmente.

La realtà oggi è così lontana dalle nostre aspirazioni ma queste tendono per sempre fissate in sbagliando nell'attuare il problema.

I tecnici che affrontano lo studio del piano regolatore di Milano o di Genova, o della sistemazione dei borghi e finché sono confusi come dibattiti tra i fratelli storici della società italiana che è a lungo circa a troppo presto, e i loro ideali che vorrebbero essere rapidamente questo tipo di fatto.

Così, da noi come elsewhere, gli architetti sono costretti a diffondere le loro idee con parole che sembrano talvolta costruite dalle loro menti e per questo sono loro persone molto generali, tendono a non ideali ma si concentrano su quei dati di fatto.

È un tentativo di creare, di creare del nostro un suo pensiero ideale che la cosa dello spirito sono di per se stessa una realtà che questo tema nella l'architettura, proprio per questo motivo, tutti noi dimentichiamo.

Se consideriamo i problemi dell'architettura, finalmente possiamo dire che la fabbrica non è stata una o grande ingegneria che anche il mondo ufficiale, spinto dalle necessità, ha sempre oggi ad accogliere le nuove idee per correggere posizioni create soltanto la prova che il nostro lavoro di artisti, di architetti, di tecnici non è caduto nel vuoto. Il tema che già propugna al la parte integrante del nostro discorso.

Ernesto N. Rogers

Fig. 2b. 'Ricostruzione: dall'oggetto d'uso alla città' *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 215 (1946).

this was not an aim that would show its results straight away. There was a felt need to show patience and renew its faith in the project, thus recalling his article 'Una casa a ciascuno' in *Il Politecnico* in 1945 written a year earlier. After only a year at *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*, Rogers disclosed the scepticism that he felt coming from the publisher. In the first issue of 1947, he explained his position at the magazine:

This review, which some find too 'bourgeois' and others too 'progressive', costs us much labour. Labour which is much more superior than its results. In the course of last year we issued twelve numbers. The Publisher shows us the diagrams of the life of each number, like a nurse anxious for her child's health. We, at the Editorial board, show him the letters from every part of the world, praising and encouraging us to continue along our path.

In these pages we explained very often our aims. If we are so far from our goal, it is not only because our forces are unequal to the task, but also because, interested in the house of man, we fatally reflect the crisis of society where our new problems are faced and developed. Convinced as we are of the deep influence that aesthetics, ethics and economics have on one another, we tried to portray the situation by projecting specific questions of interest to us as architects onto other activities which have the same aims. Someone said we are 'humanists', and we are inclined to accept that definition, provided it loses any academic weight trying to insert itself into the very core of life. Moreover, had not this term a moralising tint, we would simply prefer to be called 'human'.²⁷

The 'house of man' captured the spirit of humanism and made man feel as it were his home. Using technological means to build, the architect and client tried to find an equilibrium between the machine and the human. While technology served to make life easier, more comfortable and practical, the house identified itself with the very aim of existence. Similarly, the individual tended to find his own place within the family and as a member of society.²⁸ Through its planning, architecture expressed psychological aims and moral principles of pre-established ethics where discipline and freedom were dialectical terms struggling to be included in the human society. Being perceptive to this side of the built environment, the individual learnt to become more responsible towards other people and himself because the harmony of his surroundings encouraged a balance in the community.²⁹

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²⁷ Rogers, E. N. 'Nota ai lettori' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 217, 1947, p. 1.

²⁸ See, Rogers, E. N. 'Apologo' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 222, 1947, p. 65.

²⁹ See, Rogers, E. N. 'Architettura educatrice' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 220, 1947.

In 1947, the political situation reflected the crisis that was raised in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*. The Communists were expelled from the government, the magazine *Il Politecnico* saw its light coming to an end and Rogers was dismissed as the editor of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* at the end of the year, being replaced by Gio Ponti.³⁰ Communism met a severe political hostility, not least because of American influence accelerated by the Marshall Aid which was not only a financial help but an anti-communist movement. *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* proved to be un-popular and Rogers's attempts to realise his aims hit a stumbling block with the fact that the modern style of a home was a matter of 'taste'. Penny Sparke made this argument in her article "'A Home for Everybody?' Design, Ideology and the Culture of the Home in Italy, 1945 - 1972' where she maintained that the fate of the modern home within post-war Italian culture was an essentially bourgeois phenomenon. In spite of the dual advantages of visual simplicity and easy adaptation to mass production (essential factors within the new housing programme as far as the economics of manufacturing were concerned), the modern style appealed to a middle-class rather than to a working-class consumer.³¹ In the last issue of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* in 1947 n. 223, Rogers made his farewell. He had not met enough tolerance for his aim for a 'new humanism' to be realised. Nor had there been a general understanding that allowed the house to be looked at in a cultural context rather than in its isolation and subject to the caprice of the bourgeois. The goal had been to recapture the 'human scale' not only in physical sense but in terms of morality. That is, the stylistic question became merged with the moral one. Clarity of thought and conscience, and a defence of the threatened personality were sought in clarity of formal expression.

The voice of the evolutionary development within the historical perspective of pre-war Italian rationalism, continued, however, to be heard through the group formed in Milan in 1946, Movimento Studi d'Architettura (MSA). Its first president was the architect Lodovico Belgiojoso (who with Banfi - who died in a German concentration camp in 1945 - Peressutti and Rogers was a member of BBPR) and Rogers took over in 1950 to 1951. Their criteria was to carry out research into technology, aesthetics and social concepts within architectural practice and to lay out propositions for the urgent need to re-organise social life. This organisation represented one side of the architectural culture of the reconstruction and adopted the urgent position of working with

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³⁰ There are a number of accounts that indicate that Rogers was dismissed specifically because of political change. These can be found in *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Progettazione dell'Architettura del Politecnico del Milano* which was dedicated to Ernesto N. Rogers n. 15 1993. Here Julia Banfi, in 'Esperienze con Rogers *Quadrante, Domus, Casabella*', refers to Rogers being dismissed as having to be the one who paid for the situation with his trust and tools of communication when the conservatives took the upperhand of the political situation (p. 21). In a conversation with Vittorio Gregotti (Milan, April 1996) he confirmed that Rogers had been brutally dismissed on political grounds just like himself who had received the same treatment at the end of 1995.

³¹ Published in *Modernism in Design*, edited by P. Greenhalgh. London 1990, p. 188.

diligence, to be 'architetti militanti'. This organisation was an important meeting point for Milanese architects. Initially there were 24 architects including, the three members in BBPR, Lingeri, Bottoni, Albini, Palanti, Gardella, Mucchi, Marescotti, Tevarotto many of whom grouped with the AR plan, the magazines *Quadrante* and *Casabella*. The slogan 'all that is useful is beautiful' was reversed to 'all that is beautiful is useful' because beauty in itself contained usefulness. In beautiful architecture, in authentic architecture, the reflection of a world was caught which was vaster than the limited and arid utilitarian one.³² Form, utility and beauty were an indispensable unity to the design process of the human artefact, from the spoon to the city. In these two years of reconstruction (1945 - 1947) architects, both in their practice and theoretical statements published in the various magazines, tried to find a new language that would spring up from Italian culture and which would express democracy and a human society. Opening up the way of communication was felt to be a principal aim between the different social classes and members of society that would be reflected in the built environment. The moral grounds of discipline and freedom epitomised the architecture of the human society in the belief that harmony in the built environment educated people to show a mutual respect and a balance in society.

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³² See, Gardella, I. (1986) 'The Last Fifty Years of Italian Architecture Reflected in the Eye of an Architect' *ibid.* p. 11.

1.2

The city's projection of its entity and identity

1.2.1

An integrity of a 'quartiere', QT8

The optimism of the 'new humanism' produced certain built manifestations. At the VIII Triennale exhibition in 1948, *Il Quartiere sperimentale della Triennale di Milano* (QT8), the architect Piero Bottoni supervised a district plan where the aim was to propose a site for mixed classes and services [fig. 3]. The QT8 - whose urban plan became an integral part of Milan's master plan of 1953, as well as its plans for reconstruction - was conceived as a permanent exhibition of new typologies, of experimental programmes in construction and hygiene, and of a technology based on prefabrication and industrialisation. Architects experimented with prefabrication and steel structures that would at the same time increase the speed of construction and be economical for both the low-income housing and the designed villas on the hill of Monte Stella. Additionally, apart from visualising the urban planning, the future inhabitants of QT8 had the opportunity to see 'the house of man' fitted with the most modern furniture and fittings. For the first time, an architect furnished the kitchen with refrigerator, a children's playground was an assumed part of the environment, a small private garden was put within reach of a low income family, and the hill of Monte Stella provided healthy outdoor activity for everybody. This made it among the most successful planning achievements dating from this period as well as being an important contribution to the understanding of the correlation between buildings, how

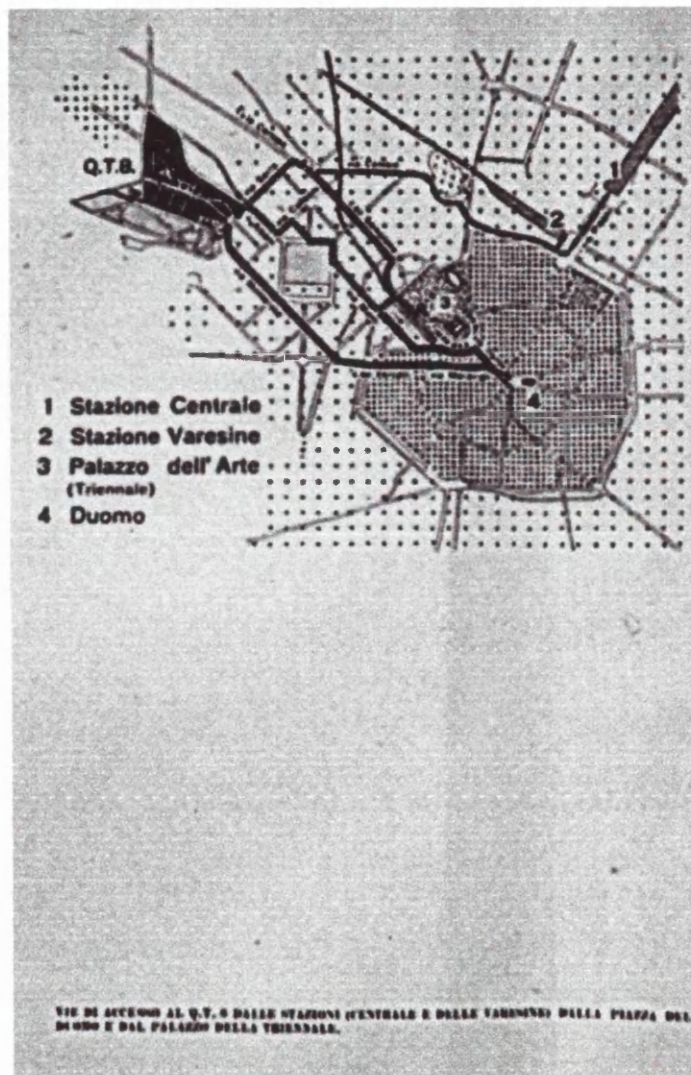


Fig. 3.- QT8, the plan from 1948, Il Quartiere sperimentale della Triennale di Milano (1954).
The unity of the 'quartiere' was emphasised not only through its physical context but even more with its political connotations of living in a community.

people communicated through the work of architects and what kind of relationship the 'quartiere' had with the city.

The problems that Bottoni confronted were not of a formal nature. His aims were expressed in his preface to the catalogue *Il Quartiere sperimentale della Triennale di Milano, QT8*, where the commitment to the effort of reconstruction was clearly felt. He explained that, since the VIII Triennale was prepared in the immediate post-war days, it took a definite stand in the social and economic climate created by the war. The exhibition focused on confronting problems for the benefit of the lower classes, not least because the last seven Triennales had dealt with concepts concerning the well-to-do, with a few exceptions.³³ This new 'quartiere' of Milan, QT8, was directly connected to the city from the Central and Varesine railway stations, from the Cathedral and from Palazzo dell'Arte (the centre of the Triennale). Importantly, it was not referred to as a suburb ('quartiere periferia' or 'sobborghi'). It had a more significant relationship with the city. The 'quartiere' was an expansion of the city of Milan not intended for a homogenous class but for people at various economic levels. A visual contact with the city was created by the hill Monte Stella which became the 'spirito milanese', a green area for the whole of the city.

Piero Bottoni defined the uniqueness of QT8 as a manifestation of 'società umana' (human society).³⁴ The inhabitants lived in a close relationship to nature and at the same time possessed the feeling of living in a community. There were open spaces for housing in contrast to the closed courtyards in the city, yet the paths and streets were secure because they maintained a separate function, as pedestrians and cars were not to be mixed. In this context one recalls a scene from the film, *Rocco e suoi fratelli* ("Rocco and his brothers") (1960) by Luchino Visconti. Rocco, a professional boxer, appears celebrating with his family at their home just after having won a championship. Soon he is called by his neighbours who cheer him from their balconies of the closed courtyard such as those that Bottoni had referred to and he had felt inadequate to a modern way of life. In Visconti's film, the neighbours merged into each others lives, intensified in the typology of the building, and by which a real sense of community was brought forward. Contrasted with this scene, the urban planning of QT8 enriched the means of communication by not only including the buildings' typology, but also the immediate surroundings of the house (its garden and playgrounds), and the communal areas like Monte Stella and the community centre at the heart of the 'quartiere'. Within the concept of the 'new humanism', QT8 tried in this way to give space to the individual and

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³³ Bottoni, P. (1954) The Preface to *Il Quartiere sperimentale della Triennale di Milano, Q.T.8*. Centro Studi Triennale 6. Collana di Quaderni, a cura di Zetti e Spreafico. Editoriale Domus, Milano.

³⁴ Bottoni, P. (1954) *Il Quartiere sperimentale della Triennale di Milano, Q.T.8*. *ibid.* p. 4.

to provide him with added experiences of urban life attending both to private and collective aspects of his life.

Identifying an Italian urban experience, *Domus* published 'Quartieri Italiana' (1954), a housing scheme at Gozzano in the province of Novara, designed by the architect Ettore Sottsass where the consciousness of one's neighbours was recollected in the urban design.³⁵ Instead of adopting the anglo-saxon and German ideas of gathering small detached houses in the garden city and of gathering dwellings into an enormous machine like Le Corbusier's *Unité de Habitation* in Marseilles, Sottsass aimed to arrange houses very close to each other; to create small and changeable spaces, although always adapted to the inhabitants, their habits and basic wishes. That is, to be able to chat from the window to a neighbour, to see children playing and to be able to listen to their games, to have an overall perception of the various things and to feel these different perspectives at the same time. [fig. 4] The squares, 'a very Italian invention', were small in proportion because living together in an urban environment meant for Sottsass to offer elastic social life and relationships. Offering an alternative to these kind of urban affinities, Bottoni believed that those who stayed in QT8 did not want to "return to this sea of asphalt, of stone, of dissonant sounds which surround their house, do not want to lose nature and the sky which they have recuperated." They would like many similar 'quartiere' to rise in all over the world for the inhabitants of all cities. Before arriving at its ultimate form, however, QT8 had three stages. The original plan of 1946, exhibited at the VIII Triennale in 1948, divided the 'quartiere' into four residential zones connected by a piazza and a commercial centre. For the second project, published in 1950 and exhibited at the IX Triennale in 1951, the council requested an increase in residential density. Eleven-storey buildings were proposed, among the first of their kind in Italy. The third proposal became part of the general plan for Milan in 1953, exhibited at the X Triennale in 1954. At this stage, Monte Stella became the focus of the plan both as a centre of recreation and a visual connection to the city. The main difference between the last and the two previous projects lay in the street layout. QT8 became a unique example in Italy, dividing the circulation into four types of streets which varied according to their destination and function, and if they were assigned for cars or pedestrians. Additionally, an emphasis was put on maximising the unity between the four zones and the centre of the 'quartiere'. The sense of belonging to a community was encouraged by directing the circulation to the heart of the 'quartiere' which included the church, a restaurant, a building for cinema, theatre, offices, and a group of shops and a supermarket. This enabled the residents to meet, communicate and take part in each others lives. Following this typology,

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³⁵ Quartiere all'Italiana' - Ettore Sottsass jr. arch. in *Domus* n. 293, 1954, pp. 8-10. This was part of the INA housing scheme (INA-Casa) which was initiated by the Italian government in the aid of reconstruction. For further reading about INA-Casa see; Tafuri, M. (1990) *History of Italian Architecture, 1944 - 1985*. The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts. London, England.



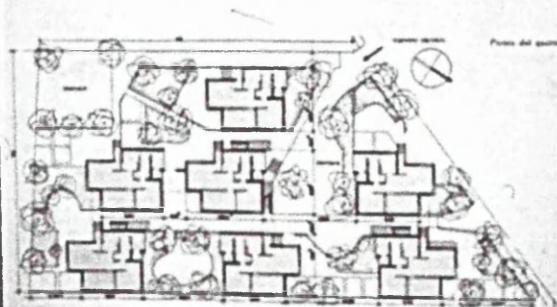
Quartiere all'italiana

di Franco Albini e Luigi Piccinini

Questo nuovo insieme di case è nato a Sesto San Giovanni, in provincia di Novara, rispondendo l'idea, già sperimentata da Sottsass jr e Caviglioli, che tra i modi di raggruppare abitazioni c'è quello tradizionale italiano. Tra il modo anglosassone e quello di raggruppare in una grande villa suburbana e quello di raggruppare abitazioni in un unico nucleo come a Marigli, c'è il modo italiano del «rione», cioè la struttura di nuclei intorno a una piazza o a una strada, con strade di creare spazi giardini e

ricoverati, sempre tutti in un unico nucleo, all'interno delle loro abitazioni e ai suoi giardini per abitazioni che sono quelli di disporre da sinistra a destra sul tutto, di vedere i bambini giocare, di sentirli giocare, di avere una prospettiva della loro vita variata e di sentirsi parte della prospettiva. Le piante, non le piante d'arredo ma le piante giardini con l'aria di stare, sono una lavorazione molto italiana e molto generica, da non dimenticare già che l'abitazione italiana, e italiana non

la dimentica per far abitare lo stesso, vuol dire anche creare il rapporto sociale che si sta in un rione e che non si sta in un nucleo, come è stato lo stesso nell'urbanistica del quartiere all'italiano. Per il resto il piano anche nell'architettura non ricerca l'idea che è forse l'unico schema possibile per raggruppare abitazioni dall'abitazione tradizionale di tutta Italia e che non può essere naturalmente non si segue facilmente l'impianto italiano di piani come la Strada o la Finlandia.



Piano del quartiere

Fig. 4.- 'Quartiere all'italiana' - Ettore Sottsass Jr. arch. *Domus* n. 293 (1954).
The plan provided a sense of social integrity while other illustrations portrayed the buildings rather than spaces. Buildings that suggested their drama and personality through the play of volumes and shadows.

the 'quartiere' had a certain sense of autonomy recalling the history of town planning back to the medieval centres which were composed of varying functions - the cathedral, town hall and the piazza. In the modern context, the functions of the 'quartiere' had evolved although it maintained its characteristics by means of possessing its own organisation and symbols and, a degree of political autonomy. Historically, it was a matter of communal feeling and of protection that bound the inhabitants of neighbourhoods together.³⁶ In QT8 it was a matter of living together, a feeling that was reinforced by the intense distress that the war had created. Bottoni managed to convince the civic authorities for the need to maintain close bonds between different social groups, physical and moral. The culture and varied experiences of the inhabitants would help to create an identity for the new 'quartiere' that would become common and subjective to the neighbourhood as a whole. In this way, QT8 confronted the collective aspects of human life that Rogers drew attention to in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* 221, 1947. He argued that it was at QT8 that the problem of reconstruction centred explicitly on 'the house of man' within an urban context. It was a social programme in the widest sense, using a mixture of formal means that included modern industrial design and architecture as well as the decorative arts.³⁷ A synthesis of architectural disciplines managed to create unified urban planning that respected human contacts, economic interests and formal expressions. In order to achieve the integrity of human space that was bound up with the 'new humanism', QT8 called on the intellect and use of wide knowledge as a building component that would sustain its popularity and success.

1.2.2

'The Heart of the City'

Arguing in favour of open spaces made to a human scale in the city, Ernesto Rogers believed that the strength of the Heart of the city was to encourage participation and liberation of communication, it was a place where men were able to be different. A plurality of expressions which composed the urban environment was particular to the Italian approach to humanism and was acknowledged as part of the various building components. Rogers explained,

[...] the Heart can be neither the centre of business, as in the capitalistic organisations, nor the factory, the symbol of a proletarian society. The Heart of the City must be the centre of more extensive human relationships: conversation, discussion, the shopping parade, '*piropeo*', '*flâneur*', and that priceless '*dolce far niente*' in its finest significance - the natural

³⁶ For further reading about the development of the city see, Benevolo, L. (1993) *The European City*. Blackwell. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA.

³⁷ Rogers, E. N. 'Esperienza dell'ottava Triennale' in *Domus la casa dell'uomo* n. 221, 1947, p. 47.

The Heart was, therefore, not static or absolute. Everyone, in different centres and under varied circumstances, were encouraged to bring a particular approach to the subject, from the social, aesthetic, technical, and psychological points of view. According to Rogers, the architect's task was to give form to the dialectical synthesis of the complex field of culture in which citizens participated and to create an artistic surrounding in which the realities and problems of the day were expressed. There was no way of defining an architectonic-urbanistic solution prior to its actual application as every case differed within the Heart. The functional method could however be prescribed that urged for empirical researches in the practical field and unprejudiced proposals. This would lead to a really international architecture which was, nevertheless, personified in the individuality of the artist and with characteristics of the *genius loci*.³⁹

The focus on the emotional and material needs of man in the urban context was the subject of two CIAM congresses (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) where both Ernesto Rogers and Piero Bottoni were members of the Italian group. In CIAM VI (1947), held at Bridgwater in England, the aim was to transcend the rigidity of the Functional city by affirming CIAM's objective to work for the creation of a physical environment that would satisfy man's emotional and material needs. Moreover, the 'human society' was developed in CIAM VIII (1951), entitled 'The Heart of the City' which was held at Hoddesdon in England. The re-evaluation of the human space was a reaction to earlier visions that CIAM had already established. The social circumstances had drastically changed from before the Second World War. The Statements for the Athens Charter in 1933 had made clear that the Congress desired zoning as the concept for the Functional city and a general guideline for town planning practice. The main principles of town planning were: the correct choice of site and size for the separate areas for work, dwellings, transportation and recreation; the development and planning of these areas in accordance with their own specific laws and requirements; the bringing of these areas into a mutual relationship, so that daily recurring alternation of work, home life and recreation could proceed from the point of view of the greatest saving of time. In this way, human need and the human scale constituted the bases for the work of architects in the field of town planning, starting from a thorough grounding in the housing unit and the relationship between dwelling, work and recreation and how to order them in space. For the solution of this problem the testing of the technical possibilities and systematic co-operation with specialists were considered indispensable.

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³⁸ Rogers, E. N. 'The Heart: Human Problem in Cities' in Tyrwhitt, J., Sert, J. L., Rogers, E. N. (ed.) (1952) *ibid.*, p. 73.

³⁹ Rogers, E. N. 'The Heart: Human Problem in Cities', *ibid.*, p. 71.

All solutions were fundamentally influenced by the political and economic circumstances and not least by the disposition to build.⁴⁰ It followed that the Functional City was portrayed on the basis of economics, not only in terms of the inhabitant and his relationship to home and work, but equally, for the operation and existence of the city itself. The employer/ industrialist was the one who benefited the most, keeping his workers close at hand - both placed at the periphery of the city. Simultaneously, the communicative value of, and within, the city changed as a result of a constant movement to and from the city made by its inhabitants.⁴¹ The intention was not, however, to isolate the individual in the outskirts. CIAM's secretary, Sigfried Giedion, had already given measure to the common aim in the Brussels congress in 1930 where he stated that "just as the individual cell of habitation leads to the organisation of the methods of construction, so too the methods of construction lead to the organisation of the entire city."⁴² This was a universal outlook that applied equally to every city. The emphasis changed in 1947. Both QT8 and CIAM VI and VIII, proposed an urban environment of integrity. The subject of the meeting at Hoddesdon, the 'Core', was suggested by the English members. Their proposal argued that apart from dwellings, work, circulation, cultivation of mind and body constituting one's life, there was also another element which made the community a community and not merely an aggregation of individuals. An essential feature of any true organism was the physical heart, or nucleus, the core. A community of people was an organism, a self-conscious organism. The members were dependent on one another, but at the same time, the relationship between people and their inter-communication varied. At each level the creation of a special physical environment was required as a setting for the expression of this kind of community and as an actual expression of it. This was the physical heart of the community. The important role of the core was to enable people to meet one another and to exchange ideas. The use of rhetoric was essentially the same as the one by Bottoni at QT8 in describing the communicative value of the place. The English group explained the core as

[...] a rendez-vous, a place where people may gather for leisurely intercourse and contemplation. The Core is the domain of the pedestrian, where all motorised traffic is banned. The human scale should pervade all the constituent elements of the Core. The expression of the Core must interpret the human activities that take place: both the relations of individuals with one another and the relations of individuals with community. Its

⁴⁰ From Statements of the Athens Congress Charter, 1933. A summary of point 7 in *Het Nieuwe Bouwen Internationaal/International CIAM Volkshuisvesting Stedebouw Housing Town Planning*. An exhibition catalogue, April 3 - 29 May 1983. Rikjismuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo/Auke van der Woud The Netherlands, pp. 166-167.

⁴¹ *Het Nieuwe Bouwen Internationaal/International CIAM Volkshuisvesting Stedebouw Housing Town Planning* (1983) p. 70-71

⁴² Tafuri, M./Dal Co, F. (1986) *Modern Architecture/2*. faber and faber/ Electa, Milan Italy, p. 219.

A more pedagogical approach was offered in this meeting by Walter Gropius who insisted on the importance of building within a 'human scale' and to be aware of spatial relationships in the urban fabric. He argued that

[...] the most important factor in building a Core is the relation between the building masses and the enclosed open space. This may appear obvious, but I have found that many people are not aware of this relation, and that there are even trained architects who do not understand the meaning of open spaces. They think only of the buildings themselves, ignorant that the spaces between them are just as important. We must go far deeper in our studies than has been done already in this field, and try to check for ourselves why one open space within a Core is pleasant to us and another is not. After that we will have more knowledge about the sizes and proportions of such open spaces in relation to man. ... If we examine the Cores of old towns in Italy or France, etc, we find that very different individual buildings, often centuries apart, are living side by side, and that this is good and harmonious if the open spaces around these buildings have been made to a good human scale.⁴⁴

Architects were urged to work with, and within, the whole of society. The formation of the dominating reality depended not only on architecture but on various disciplines, - not simply on the political parties, industrialists, and the economy. The city's heart belonged to a concrete historic process in which there was a dialectical meeting of tradition as well as of renewal. It entailed a synthesis of permanence and emergence, a synthesis essential to architecture as an art. Enzo Paci, in 'Il cuore della città' in *Casabella continuità* in 1954, argued that it was not only the closed and limited aspect of the city that characterised it, but also its open character.⁴⁵ The city was the meeting-point between delimitation and relation. Its heart had both a centripetal diastolic moment and a centrifugal systoles moment. It had movement that aspired both from the outside towards the centre and towards the exterior. The city must be defined as a kind of knot of relations, i.e. as "a focal moment of relationship". In as much as the city's heart was a centre of relationship, it could not admit too radical a dualism between dwelling and nature, between human measure and cosmic measure. The anatomy of the city was a complex organism. Its

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⁴³ Het Nieuwe Bouwen Internationaal/International CIAM Volkshuisvesting Stedebouw Housing Town Planning, (1983) pp. 90-94.

⁴⁴ Gropius, W. 'The Human Scale' in J. Tyrwhitt, J. L. Sert, Rogers, E. N. (ed.) (1952) *CIAM 8. The Heart of the City: towards the humanisation of urban life*. Lund Humphries, London, p. 54.

⁴⁵ Paci, E. "Il cuore della città" in *Casabella continuità* n. 202, 1954 pp. VII - X. This was an elaboration to the above mentioned CIAM's meeting 'The Heart of the City' at Hoddesdon, England.

smallest component and each part had their own characteristics while participating in maintaining the city as an complete entity. The city was a unity which allowed for enclosure and disclosure of the various functions so its ways of communication would be in accordance with human needs. The architect was a member of this society but as he felt the need to elevate it, he must use his intellect in order to interpret its overall vision and grasp its relative values. Only then would human respect and integrity be achieved in urban planning.

1.2.3

The lyrical vocation of the city, its poetry

The perception of the city was not restricted to rationalism, or one group only. The city showed multiple sides of itself best visible in internal examinations and outward looking experimentation. These affected the collective as well as individual experiences of the city, both in ethical and artistic terms. The art critic, Giulio C. Argan, argued in his article 'Modern architecture in Italy' (1952) that Frank Lloyd Wright was regarded as a purely creative artist, the uncompromising genius who had redeemed modern architecture from the fetters of social prejudice, from middle-class limitations and the austere restrictions of the minimum standard of living.⁴⁶ To the Italian intellectual, nourished on Crocean idealism, Wright's work appeared as the only defence, or poetry, in architecture, as opposed to the economic, sociological and technical building of the rationalists. Rejecting a moral responsibility of the artist, Croce had argued that the artistic act derived from intuition and was not subject to any moral evaluation or politics. He wrote in *Guide to Aesthetics* (1913) that art was vision or intuition and could not be identified with anything physical.⁴⁷ That is, the artist produces an image or a picture which the person who enjoys art turns his eyes in the direction which the artist has pointed out to him, peers through the hole which has been opened for him, and reproduces in himself the artist's image. At the same time according to Croce, art considered in terms of its own nature has nothing to do with the useful, or with pleasure and pain. It could not have any moralistic role addressed to the viewer, to serve as a guide to the good, inspire the abhorrence of evil, correct or improve manners and morals. Nor could artists contribute to the public education of the lower classes, the reinforcing of the national or warlike spirit of a people, or to the spreading of the ideals of a modest and industrious life, and so on. Art could not do these things, any more than geometry, yet it maintains its respectability. Reinterpreted into the urban environment that was, and had been, created by the architect/artist, it

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⁴⁶ Argan, G. C. (1952) 'Modern architecture in Italy' *ibid.* No page numbers.

⁴⁷ Benetto Croce's text appears in Harrison, C. & Wood, P. (ed.) (1994) *Art in Theory 1900-1990. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Blackwell, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA., pp. 108 - 113.

was with Ponti's *Domus* that the freedom of the artist received the most attention. For Ponti the city's projection of its entity and identity was projected in the receptiveness of the viewer towards fantasy and to use active imagination rather than resign to the form of questioning. He was to write in 1956, for instance, that a way of solving social problems was through the introduction of colours as an element of life and joy.⁴⁸ As colour was a signal, it helped memory as a topographical indication and created fantasy for the benefit of happiness. Architecture was about the dream of the architect and materialising an expression of man. It was not enough to talk about architecture as rationalist, functionalist, pre-fabricated, organic, or industrial. The true outcome was through its poetry, a lyrical vocation. If the architect was only concerned with function, rationality, coherence and new materials, then his design would manifest the non-existence of active imagination.⁴⁹ Bearing this in mind, Gio Ponti yearned for the city to become natural again. If the city was planned in a particular form (a square, a star, a circle) then it had a restricted effect on its development. It would not create a nucleus, tranquillity, panoramas or recognisable points but would be boring and lifeless. It would be a system instead of a creation. The ideal city should not be rigid. One should have the freedom to get lost in an urban landscape and to see beautiful vistas.⁵⁰ This idea of architectural freedom recalls Bruno Zevi's debate about organic architecture. In his book, *Towards an Organic Architecture* written in 1949, he argued for a human scale in architecture broken down into social organisms, where "the mental outlook, which embraces city, house and furniture alike, is organic; for it involves thinking of town-planning and architecture as being at the service of living organisms. On this basis it will be possible for great art to re-arise."⁵¹ Organic principles were taken up in Italy, especially around Bruno Zevi in Rome, as a source for expressing democracy. The model looked at was derived from another cultural tradition, namely from the work of Frank Lloyd Wright which was proclaimed to be the originating force in the world for an architectural renewal. He was among the first to provide an alternative and a sense of 'freedom' for man who must be helped to regain a true and meaningful existence. To achieve this he needed 'freedom' as well as 'identity'. 'Freedom' meant primarily liberation from any absolutist systems. That is, a new right to choose and participate. 'Identity' meant to bring man back to what was original and essential.

Gio Ponti wrote in *Domus* about the city through a visual appreciation divorced of any social or moral obligations. For him, the city was a conglomeration of houses that created an entity. People who walked around

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⁴⁸ Ponti, G. 'Nelle architettura dette popolari, fantasia come in antico' in *Domus* n. 314, 1956, pp 2 - 6.

⁴⁹ Ponti, G. 'Dove far andare l'architettura' Luigi Figini e Gino Pollini arch.tti, Edificio in Milano, in *Domus* n. 239, 1949, p. 1-9.

⁵⁰ Ponti, G. 'Le Città debbono tornare naturali' in *Domus* n. 232, 1949. p. XI.

⁵¹ Zevi, B. (1950) *Towards an Organic Architecture*. Faber & Faber Limited, London, pp. 142-143.

the city could not perceive all the signs that they met. The eye responded to its limitations by making a selection of artistic buildings with an 'Italian' quality that it then kept in the memory. For the eye to grasp or understand architecture, however, it had to bear the mark of an assertive man, a creator, the man of 'civiltà' destined to fulfil a civil expression.⁵² Forms, colours and material qualities were the building ingredients that architecture was able to communicate through and produce effects on people - they had a symbolic value. Eventually, it would express how people lived, their needs and wishes. This was how Ponti described the 'italianità' that was created by individuals throughout the city. Taking a point further in the article 'Dove far andare l'architettura', he perceived the interior of the city in the exterior of the building, that is, the facade.⁵³ [fig. 5a,b] The facade was a page everything else could be deduced from. No one would be presumed illiterate because from the facade the thoughts of the architect could be read. The facade opened up a public discussion about the civic work of the architect. It was the public lesson that educated and honoured the city. One of the roles that an architect should fulfil was to create effects that would be expressed on the facade and to provide the imagination with the unexpected. For example, balconies gave a sense of three-dimensionality, as they were not part of the structure of the building yet they were part of the wall. Furthermore, windows which could be opened out, changed the facade dramatically and continuously from being flat to an irregular surface. The facade was in constant movement subject to light, shadows, treatment of the wall (e.g. grills for the balconies, shades) and views that the building offered from the upper floors of the city.

What was clear from these different written accounts, describing QT8, 'The Heart of the City' and its poetry, that the architect had to be perceptive and receptive of common identities and individual qualities of people in order to give an identity to the city. Whereas for Rogers, architecture was committed to the investigation of the conditions for humanistic existence, for Ponti it was important to give flight to the architect's imagination and fantasy. In both cases architecture of human scale and one which communicated that statement was what was being looked for. A relationship and a dialogue would then be established between the city and its citizens which the city projected with its architecture.

⁵² Ponti, G. 'Architettura vera ed architettura sognata' in *Domus* n. 233, 1949. p. XIII.

⁵³ Ponti, G. 'Dove far andare l'architettura' *ibid.*, pp. 1-9.

1.3

'Modernità', a dialogue between the past and the present

1.3.1

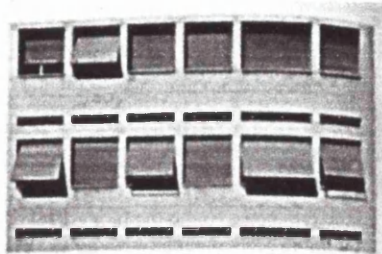
'Continuità', a historical consciousness

'Continuità' (continuity) was the subtitle that Rogers added to the title of *Casabella*, the magazine that Giuseppe Pagano and Eduardo Persico had made famous before the Second World War. [fig. 6] Rogers explained the term in his opening editorial for the new series of *Casabella* in December 1953/January 1954, by paying a homage to these previous editors, Pagano and Persico and their efforts in promoting modern architecture within a political and moral context in the 1930's. Rogers asserted that tradition as a cultural element and a building component was an indispensable part of 'continuità';

... 'Continuità' expresses our sense of humility in coming into this legacy and perhaps our presumptuousness in hoping to be worthy of such a responsibility. Continuità, much more than its practical use as a motto for *Casabella*, means historical awareness, awareness of a deep-running tradition which for Pagano and Persico and for us is expressed in the eternal struggle of the creative spirit against every manifestation of formalism, past and present.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Rogers, E. N. 'Continuità' in *Casabella continuità* n. 199, 1954, p.1 -2.

infatti nessuno, nella città di Milano, ha in poche giorni, in forza di una richiesta ancora accesa e rinnovata anche nelle sue più recenti manifestazioni, di costruire edifici nuovi, senza dimenticare dell'esistente, e forse di una natura, ed a se stessi, ancora formale, anzi costituzionale, dell'edificio. Oggi ancora il problema dei volumi d'un edificio si presenta condizionato: la forma è vincolata dal terreno; le alte inabitabili esigenze di sfruttamento economico e di dotazione economica che costituiscono il carattere dell'edificio; le esigenze che determinano l'efficienza della costruzione nei rapporti etnici della sua situazione. Non l'architetto, ripartendo in base alla natura dell'edificio, ma la sua razionale rispondenza razionale del



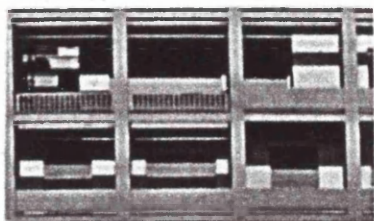
Superamento della legge di
cassa, della città di Milano.
La legge è in vigore, e non
ha ancora "a" più della

Superamento della legge di
cassa, della città di Milano.
La legge è in vigore, e non
ha ancora "a" più della

Fig. 5a.- 'Dove far andare l'architettura' - Luigi Figini e Gino Pollini arch.tti *Domus* n. 239 (1949).

The drama of the building was delineated in the sculptural qualities of its simple cubic form. This universal form was broken up and offered a multitude of experiences according to its dialogue with the city.

Europa

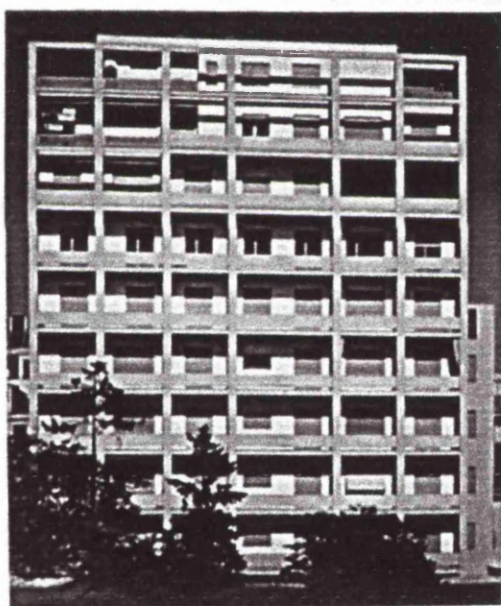


terreno e limiti imposti dai regolamenti per l'urbanistica cittadina del terreno? Determinano i criteri della costruzione. E quindi grande lavoro degli architetti su un spazio così stretto. L'opera loro scorge e riesce a trasmettere le esigenze di massima privacy.

Quella di Figini e Pollini è una costruzione senza, soprattutto, linee condotte. In più, è alta, chiusa e senza spazi, secondo la tradizione. Come, dove, perché alle finestre? In due — una strada attigua nel giardino architettonico — che via è sull'ordine ripetuto della sua struttura, sotto pedale e cuneo, senza niente di più e niente di meno.

Ma si può forse spiegare la « politica » d'una costruzione? Perché una casa è inserita nel quartiere e l'altra no? Noi sappiamo bene come quelli architettonici antichi e moderni siano

Spazio perennemente della figura per l'abitante, come guardare la città, come guardare la natura, come guardare la strada, come guardare la gente, come guardare la vita, come guardare il tempo.



La figura della casa è un'idea che si è formata nel corso del tempo e che è cambiata con le epoche. Ma è sempre stata una figura che si è formata e che si è cambiata.

Fig. 5b.- 'Dove far andare l'architettura' - Luigi Figini e Gino Pollini arch.tti *Domus* n. 239 (1949).

Fig. 6.- 'Continuità' Casabella *continuità* n. 199 (1954).
Man's condition is equally built upon bricks and rhetoric for the present-future.

The renewal of man lay in the life of the past, our memory and tradition. The memory of the dead becomes a support in our lives, and the monuments a rebirth of the past in the present, yet only in a clarity of truth. Rogers considered

... no work is truly modern which is not genuinely rooted in tradition and yet old works have contemporary meaning as long as they are capable of resounding to our voices. Thus, being outside chronology and abstract idealism and by breaking conventional barriers, we can examine the architectonic phenomenon in the immediacy of its being today: in its historical actuality. But where are the ends of the earth? If the dead and alive co-exist in our minds, where are the boundaries between living men?⁵⁵

Artistic work, in other words, always undergoes a turning point in a particular interpretation and at the same time depending on a potential choice of historical experience as well as any scheme determined beforehand. These ideas had a parallel in the writings of T. S. Eliot in 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture' from which Rogers quoted in his book, *Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico* in 1961. Eliot confirmed that "every great poet adds something of the complex material out of which future poetry will be written."⁵⁶ Two things led from this. Firstly, the artist inserted his experience into the historical reality from which it derived. Secondly, after this procedure, no other artistic work could be finished without leaving trace of the route that he had followed. In other words, individual action was related to a process of which it was part and which every other personal activity must take into consideration.⁵⁷ In this way, Rogers paid homage to Eliot's way of thinking. In the essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), Eliot wrote

... no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.⁵⁸

And, the poet himself

... is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present but the present moment of the past,

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⁵⁵ Rogers, E. N. 'Continuità' *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Eliot, T. S. in *Selected Prose*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1958, p. 24 (footnote).

⁵⁷ Rogers, E. N. (1961) *Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico*, Editori Laterza, Bari, p. 94.

⁵⁸ Eliot, T. S. (1958) in *Selected Prose*. *ibid.* p. 23.

unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.⁵⁹

To understand the significant elements in a work of art or architecture, one must grasp the dialectic force that constituted it as a phenomenon, the forces of ancestors and inheritance which were delivered to the artist through history. In addition there was the impact of his contribution to criticism and interpretation of that energy, and his unique inspiration or intuition which was a new element of his individual invention. Rogers further referred to Eliot's text as a pedagogic instrument for synthesising the sublime monuments and historical documents which faced the student of architecture, at the same time being a stimulator and a warning against any presumptuous delusion because as Eliot maintained

... the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.⁶⁰

The meaning of the 'modern' signified a "dramatic development" for it met on the cross-roads between the universal and the national, past and present. The role of the architect was to synthesise these geographical and temporal concepts and with that fusion progress would take place - on a mental and material level that would encourage a better understanding of various human needs. Rogers concluded his first editorial confirming that *Casabella continuità* believed in a truly international language, but one made of a mutual understanding, where each one contributed to particular work with his inner freedom and cultural contribution that was characteristic of the region where the work took place. The intention was to relate the problems of quantity to the untransgressable sanction of quality and help quality to become quantity little by little. This was the ethical content of aesthetics. The way to redirect the profession, and the arts, to the original synthesis, to 'techné'. The dualism of thoughts was well expressed in Rogers's next editorial, n. 200, where he explained that

...whether you call it functional or organic, the architecture of our century is based on a method in which an awareness of the tension between practical-economic factors and aesthetic factors leads to a poetic individualisation of the many factors involved in the concrete reality: our only hope for the future lies in rejecting the extremes of a lifeless positivism on the one hand and on abstract idealism on the other, and preserving this delicate tension between Beauty and Utility.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Eliot, T. S. (1958) in *Selected Prose*. *ibid.* p. 30.

⁶⁰ Eliot, T. S. (1958) in *Selected Prose*. *ibid.* p. 25.

⁶¹ Rogers, E. N. 'Pretesti per una critica non formalistica' *Casabella continuità* n. 200, 1954, p. 3.

With the concept of 'continuità' for his tool, the architect fought for a moral unity which caused both his architectural practice and intellectual output to become a political act. As a humanist, the architect was not only concerned with studying the city and its morphology, he had an ethical responsibility towards design 'from the spoon to the city', continuing with Rogers's phrase from *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* in 1946. In other words, the humanity of the citizen was expressed by his dwelling and for that reason the architect must search for the culture of his client, his humanity, before designing the dwelling that was going to be part of his existence. Speaking on behalf of the group at *Casabella continuità* (the editorial board including Marco Zanuso, Vittorio Gregotti and Giancarlo de Carlo at the very beginning - contributors were among others; Giulio C. Argan, Eugenio Gentili, Mario Labò, Giuseppe Samonà, Ludovico Quaroni, Enzo Paci, Pier Luigi Nervi, Ignazio Gardella, Guido Canella, Carlo Aymonino and Aldo Rossi, and Gae Aulenti who was responsible for the page lay-out), Rogers said;

... we ... love architecture, not as an abstract idea but as an act which expresses completely our wish to live, because we are still among those who believe in the unity of existence, or rather, in the fundamental responsibility that threatens every artist in the light of the work.⁶²

Casabella continuità believed in 'the fertile cycle man - architecture - man'. Within its ideology, the magazine was ambitious to represent the conflicts raised in society - its crisis, the few indispensable certainties and many doubts. For it to be alive, signified above all to accept the fatigue that was renewed daily, to reject acquired positions of anxiety that ended in anguish, to be remembered in the contest, and, to expand human sympathy. The word 'continuità' resonated all this. It was against hypocrisy which Rogers explained by referring to the essence of Berhold Brecht's work. That is, to explain oneself clearly and openly, and to say what one meant. Many people lived in falsehood saying 'yes' without assenting to it.

What was seen in *Casabella continuità* was a synthesis between past and present, tradition and innovation in the search for 'italianità'. Italian tradition - the peculiarity of one's place and history - drove architects to find a new balance between the past and the modern which finished in an end product unique to them. The concept of 'continuità' gave a direction to this design process. It was not a matter of creating a style but to connect, or insert, architecture and design into culture and vice versa. Man was not restricted to the interior space of his home but he was part of a larger context which embraced the whole city. He had to be seen in the light of the city as an entity; its history, tradition, contradictions, relative values and ways of living.

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⁶² Rogers, E. N. 'Continuità' *ibid.*

Understanding that historical consciousness, man realised that society would never be the same as it had been before the Second World War.⁶³ For Rogers and his team, *Casabella continuità* was a tool to give a new meaning to the city and contemporary constructions that were set next to historical buildings. There had to be a dialogue between these buildings just as there had to be a dialogue between people of whatever generation, class or employment - a communication visual and verbal. By involving different generations at the editorial board of the magazine, for instance, Rogers emphasised the productive value of a debate. He believed that one could construct with passionate and sincere discussion as well as with bricks and mortar which would then hopefully lead to a change in mentality. Only then could the concept of 'continuità' have a meaning in the post-war years because with communication the sense of historical awareness became apparent and was brought to the present.

1.3.2

The 'preesistenze ambientali' reveals the cultural environment and psychological conditions of man

In 'Tradizione dell'architettura moderna italiana', Rogers gave a dialectical meaning to the environment of the human being, how his cultural background influenced his deeper characteristics.⁶⁴ [fig. 7] Conversely, these characteristics conditioned the expression of the individual, and therefore his work. Relativity was inherent in every individual and every work of art. The work of art could be considered as products of many streams, dependent on the development of a particular theme, a figurative style and a relationship in space. The role of the contemporary architect was not only to fulfil practical needs but to conceive his work as a complete expression of a humanist concept of architecture. That is to say, to conceive it as an unitary and universal vision that also had its roots in the deepest stratification of our tradition. A respect for this background had to be maintained while establishing a dialectical relationship between the opinions of the thinker and the others. In the second issue of 1954, Rogers applied the same way of thinking in 'Pretesti per una critica non formalistica' which he based on a recent journey to Brazil.⁶⁵ To carry one's opinions with oneself around the world was an inevitable factor. However, one should try to integrate into the new culture without dogmatism or prejudice or imposing one's opinions egoistically on the visited country and its habits. By this, one learnt while

⁶³ Rogers, E. N. 'Continuità', *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Rogers, E. N. 'Tradizione dell'architettura moderna italiana' in *Casabella continuità* n. 206, 1955. This editorial was also published as an introduction to G.E. Kidder Smith's book *Italy builds; L'Italia costruisce. Its modern architecture and native inheritance*. Architectural Press London in 1955.

⁶⁵ Rogers, E. N. 'Pretesti per una critica non formalistica' in *Casabella continuità* n. 200, 1954, pp. 1-3.



ROMA - VIA DI S. ANTONIO

vo la materia sarà regidata dall'intelligenza e dal vedere degli uomini: ecco un principio classico, umanistico e, perché no?, italiano.

Potrà sembrare strano, ma bisogna concludere che l'urbanistica di base l'ha ispirato nel campo da dove la prima guerra mondiale, e beninteso in Italia piuttosto al seguito, ceto della politica contro il passato ed è un agente di rinnovamento morale, più che un vero appello tecnico e costruttivo. Ricordo i non smentiti da ieri, che ci tramandano le città sognate da questo parte del di

summa.

(La sua influenza è poi visibile almeno, nell'opera di

certi architetti, come Luzzati, Michelini, ecc., che rappresentano, subito dopo la Rivoluzione d'Ottobre, il breve sogno di libertà dell'architettura russa).

Poiché, bene l'ha fatto, piazza (piena, anche da noi) l'architettura ha potuto cogliere il senso della tradizione con alcuni particolari da quella specie di « complesso d'Idipo » che gravava sull'animo di noi.

Ma la sua linea esordisce perché, alla fine della prima guerra, l'Italia non era al centro del rinnovamento architettonico che si produceva altrove, in paesi dove la tradizione formale era meno forte, o in altri paesi che facevano suprema discrezione, stabilendo nella po-

Fig. 7.- 'Tradizione dell'architettura italiana' Casabella *continuità* n. 206 (1955).
Tradition penetrates the urban environment pronouncing constant mutations within that which never seems to change.

travelling. A historical consciousness must help us to know how to locate the facts of just positions in respect to the co-ordination of space and time as well as psychological projections which take on the colour of each person's individual history. Therefore one had to exercise an objective criticism. T. S. Eliot, in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), offered to broaden the terms of historical sense of artists and critics, while they were placed on guard against congenital deformations, which changed the quality of judgement. He wrote,

... every nation, every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind; and is even more oblivious of the shortcomings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius.⁶⁶

A sufficiently open critique should be able to gather essential values and characteristics of the particular cultural sphere, in the same contradictory activities. That is, in their individual differences and most profound significance, personalities took shape from many directions. Obviously, the knowledge of historiographical elements was a necessary complement in order to penetrate into the truth of things, and to foresee logical developments. Bearing that in mind, Rogers argued in the above mentioned article on Brazil, that its architecture had been subject to arbitrary, diametrically opposed, and exaggerated judgements too many times. Even among the most gifted observers, some had not known how to discriminate between emotions, arising from a sudden flow of constructions taking place and certain arrogant innovations of outward appearance. Rogers took Sigfried Giedion as an example of someone who believed himself to have been able to perceive an indication of a new content of liberty but he had not been sufficiently informed when that freedom deteriorated into complete freedom and arbitrariness. Such an accommodating judgement of the Swiss critic could only be justified as a reaction to a certain claustrophobia that the architecture of his own country, which was too self-controlled, might have generated in his mind. Max Bill (another Swiss), a very accurate artist and committed to identify his work with objective mathematical and geometric values, had also limited his critical observations on Brazilian architecture as he had not felt the significance of arts considered Rogers. Not even in cases when the work of art was perfectly coherent in itself and accomplished respectable results. To look at Brazilian architecture from a particular angle (for instance Swiss) was, in any case, an erroneous abstraction. One which, for Rogers, led inevitably to an extreme and disgraceful polarity of formalist critique. In order to lead to a fair conclusion one had to try to sense the multiple elements that composed the environment - the past, present and that would build the future.

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⁶⁶ Eliot, T. S. in *Selected Prose*. *ibid.* p. 22.

Similar thoughts were expressed by Paci in 'Sull'architettura contemporanea' (1956) where he argued for the need to encourage interrelationships in our temporal existence which would provide an understanding of the past while opening up to the future. In reality, no given absolute atom existed. Every element was already relative. In urbanistic terms, this meant that every nucleus of buildings, or a city, was not simply a totality of buildings. The possibility to blend with others already existed in every building because in the form of construction was the potential to participate in a larger relationship. This was not, however to suggest a repetition of identical buildings. The harmony of the city was not mechanically juxtaposed but consisted of an organic relationship between parts within the whole. In order to renew the organic construction of the building or the city, it was important to impose a standard, and not to have the standard conditioning construction. Man must produce the means that he needed in order to develop and raise his construction instead of remaining in secondary methods that were no longer useful for its lack of novelty.⁶⁷ Created by means of technology, new types and typologies in the building sector should express their own forms. They should communicate symbols of contemporaneity. The integration with the pre-existing environment, or with history, was therefore a process without finite solutions. It was a testimony to the crisis between the past and present. Rogers re-asserted 'continuità' in the context of the 'preesistenza ambientale' (pre-existing environment) in the issue n. 204 in 1955. The architect Joan Ockman, in her book *Architecture Culture 1943–1968*, translates 'ambientali' as 'condition' and 'context' for Rogers's article. In this thesis, however, the term is translated as 'environment' as it both implies a physical built space and a cultural space (in terms of interests and people that one associates with etc.) It was an environment which not only existed physically but incorporated the cultural and psychological circumstances of man. This environment was not to be perceived with nostalgia, but to be considered as evidence of traditions, tastes, needs and environmental factors attributed to a peculiar location and culture. The characteristics of a country were reflected in honest architecture. Architecture with integrity was a synthesis between form and content. In that sense, architecture could not be transferred from a place or a country. The sensitivity towards the environment would be lost in the process of removal, and the synthesis between beauty and utility would vanish as the architecture was taken out of context. New buildings would respect their environment and interpret its history. An international language of architecture could therefore never describe contextual architecture. A new role for architecture had to be applied from which Rogers proposed to insert the needs of life into culture and - conversely - to insert culture into everyday life.⁶⁸ In reality, living and experiencing an urban setting, being the inhabitant or a visitor, depended on

⁶⁷ Paci, E. 'Sull'Architettura contemporanea' in *Relazioni e significati III*, (1966) Lampugniani Nigri, Milano, p. 140.

⁶⁸ Rogers, E. N. 'Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei' in *Casabella continuità* n. 204, 1955, p. 3.

the individual's sensitivity and of how well he was connected to the culture of the place. The architect, citizen and the attentive visitor all brought with them their own backgrounds and cultural values when dealing with the city. Evaluating the pre-existing environment according to its own terms and without prejudice, however, allowed these individuals to enrich their own language and knowledge. This objective way of looking at the city encouraged experiences at a subjective level and at the same time brought forward the identity of the city itself.

1.3.3

The dialectic of the city

In an article on 'La città sul monte Erice' in *Casabella continuità* n. 201, 1954, Edoardo Caracciolo drew attention to the characteristics of the city's history and planning.⁶⁹ [fig. 8a,b] It was a city where strong Muslim and Spanish influences were found in the typology of the houses. For instance, they did not open to the street but to interior courtyards. Importantly, these courtyards were not only for a single family but were also intended for a community of many families, where a great part of their lives took place. A number of characteristics could be felt within this urban setting which Caracciolo delineated. There was an absolute lack of building or urban planning, of any geometrical element based on an adopted level, straight line, or angle. A constant and absolute adoption of human measure was maintained and that which surpassed normal proportions then seemed awkward. Facing the street, the composition was strictly of one material. Rooms preferably opened up to the common courtyards. The few windows were inserted deeply in the walls and the roofs were borne from the corners and attics. The stone appeared alive because the alternative fog and sun had created a small flora of a great variety of colours, producing an impressive 'hot' shade of grey that proved difficult to describe in an image. A composition of elements, stylistically arranged or not, were never valued in terms of the facade. The wall unfolded in a continuous sequence along the curved street with tremendous effects. The grey constancy of the street wall opened up to an entrance onto the common and bright courtyards, often rich with plants and flowers, and where old textiles and multicoloured carpets spread. All these elements together in the same building provided an austere compactness and unity which took on mystical effects. This kind of anonymous architecture encouraged a deep search for 'italianità' in the city, and to gain knowledge of form, utility and beauty rooted in the peculiarity of a place. Walking around a city one could see how it had built up according to its economy, power, local building materials and living traditions. Constructing a 'new' building in that environment, the architect had to be able continue the dialogue with history and add to the conversation in a modest way. Modest because otherwise the building would be alien in that

⁶⁹ Caracciolo, E. 'La città sul monte Erice' in *Casabella continuità* n. 201, 1954, pp. 42 - 49.

place. The aesthetic, form and content were therefore bound together with integrity wanting to communicate in the same language to that which they inserted themselves and, at the same time, to bring their own experience to the new place and consciously, to enrich the 'pre-existing environment'.

The city was a web of interrelationships. Experiencing and retaining the city in one's memory implied a review of its history - how people lived and dwelled - and demanded an observation of how these elements changed with time - how the present and past had met and produced a new relationship that surpassed the preceding one. Tradition was visible everywhere in the city. Buildings were an expression of a particular epoch, and demonstrated to an extent, with their typologies and relationship with other buildings, the inhabitants' way of life. The collective city represented a constant creation, fusion and disruption of ideas. Everything was relative in the city subject to the cultural context of the inhabitant. Thus, the concept of architecture was inseparable from the thinking of a city as an organism. Individual buildings were seen to perform as a delimited space of a larger concept that included the culture of living in a city. Giuseppe Samonà made a similar point in his book *Urbanistica e l'avvenire della città* (1959), where he gave an account of the living organism of the city:

During a growth of a city along the course of the centuries, there is a vital sense that shapes everything contained in it, and a coherence recognisable in the custom as well as in the spaces; so that every part of the city, or, at least, every essential part, has meaning because it belongs to the continuity of extension of the urban texture according to unmistakable characteristics. ... Any effort towards saving the historico-artistic heritage of our towns must dissolve its negative charge, and allow the old texture to enter the process of reshaping urban life, and where this process has not yet started, must create the right conditions to bring it about.⁷⁰

The texture of the urban fabric had a soul that must not be ripped from its roots. Any contextual changes were a reflection of those roots and lead to a reshaping of contemporary life. This approach towards the pre-existing environment shifted from CIAM's rhetoric from the *Athens Charter*, in 1933, where the emphasis had been placed on economic needs of the city and hygiene. That is,

... the historical parts of the city must be preserved where they were of historical importance, that they must not provide bad

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⁷⁰ Quoted from Tafuri, M. (1980) *Theories and History of Architecture*. Granada, London, p. 59. The book was first published by Laterza in Rome and Bari in 1968 under the title *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*.

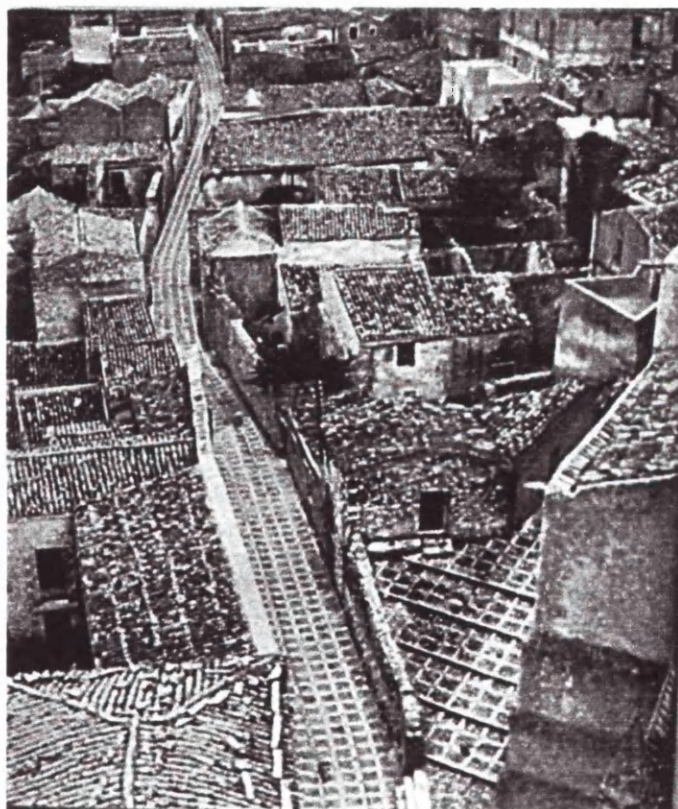


Fig. 8a.- 'La città sul monte Erice' Casabella *continuità* n. 201 (1954).

The city, typology, ways of living and building materials are interconnected and together create an environment of a human scale as the only measurement for building.

La città sul monte Erice

La stessa montagna che si staglia pendente alla volta orientale da Capo Prato sino alle montagne del Palermitano, diventa poi in un istante collinare ed in quel vasto panorama che si stende sono a

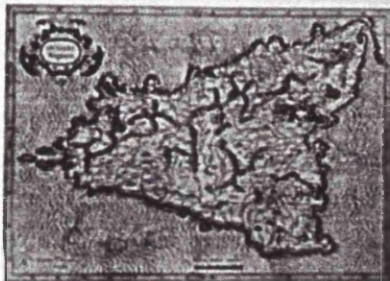
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Il principio, fondamentale, la base ed il suo
to, in il sistema della telemetria nat-
azionale.

Di esso il film sembra appesantito talmente da interpreti ed elementi estranei molto simili (quasi-identici) del 1.° del 2.°.

Interna presenza o suggestione ha un'alta, discreta, la grande cortina dove via neppure con le quote importanti locali, sotto la guida coraggiosa, che

Valeria del Cavallotti col figlio che nasce il 19 gennaio, 1900. In "L'Espresso" di Roma, 1990. (Foto: M. Di Stefano, Ag. Ansa) In basso: la foto che mostra il suo incontro nella camera nuda dell'800. E' un'immagine della "Gazzetta" di Roma, sempre intitolata "L'Espresso" di Roma. Sotto: l'uscita di Valeria del Cavallotti e il figlio che spariscono nel buio. Sotto: la sua casa in viale Mazzini di Roma. E' una delle foto che sono state pubblicate in "L'Espresso" di Roma, 1990. (Foto: M. Di Stefano, Ag. Ansa)



Le cinque città medievali (da sinistra a destra) sono: Cortina, Sarnon, Cortina, Cortina, Cortina. Le cinque città medievali (da sinistra a destra) sono: Cortina, Sarnon, Cortina, Cortina, Cortina. Le cinque città medievali (da sinistra a destra) sono: Cortina, Sarnon, Cortina, Cortina, Cortina.



Fig. 8b.- 'La città sul monte Erice' Casabella continuità n. 201 (1954).

living conditions for the population that is compelled to live in it.

...

The historic object (separate monuments or sectors of the city) must be retained ... when the opportunity is afforded to remove its restricting influence on development by the diversion of traffic round it or the shifting of the focal point. An aesthetic adaptation of new parts of the city to the historic area has a catastrophic effect on the development of a city and is in no way to be desired. By the demolition of slum dwellings surrounding the historic monuments, green areas can be created, which improve the hygienic condition in those areas.⁷¹

Any acknowledgement of a historical place was tied to the efficient function of the city rather than encouraging strong cultural ties to a place, or an evolution of already built environment that citizens could associate with. It was not to be true to the moment to relive the forms and history of the past.

During the 1950's, *Casabella continuità* focused on cultural aspects of urban planning in particular cities in Italy such as Novara, Brindisi, and Trieste, a series which headed the title *Inchieste edilizie nelle città Italiana*. As a way of obtaining knowledge about their characteristics the articles traced the history of these cities in terms of location, economy, ways of living, military command and land ownership. These elements became building components that helped to sustain a respect for the 'pre-existing environment'. The inquiry phrased by the editorial board included questions like; How is building carried out in Italian provinces? What type of qualified personnel and what type of buyer form the actual basis of the building trade? What is the role of the financing system that is used, the regional market, the land owned by town councils or by the government and how is this incorporated in the already existent layout of the town? Finally, what source of information or what contacts shape the building design? Reflecting on changes and movements that had occurred during the history of a city like Novara, one noticed that all its developments were in constant fluctuation.⁷² In 'Problema dell'architettura contemporanea' in *Casabella continuità* n. 209, 1956, Enzo Paci explained this condition of architecture as a relational phenomenon, its dialectic relationship with society:

Architecture does not only fulfil functional purposes, supplying immediate needs, but since it is an art, it is a creative expression of possible new relationships. When architecture is considered as an art, its relationship to society at a given time is directed

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⁷¹ Het Nieuwe Bouwen Internationaal/International CIAM Volkshuisvesting Stedebouw Housing Town Planning (1983), p. 70 - 71.

⁷² Buzzi, F./Scarpini, G. 'Novara. Affermazione e negazione dell'immagine della città' in *Casabella continuità*, n. 216, 1957, pp. 53 - 59.

towards a new relationship, which has not yet been established socially and historically. New relational forms, if they have aesthetic value, are greater than the utilitarian functions that they fulfil. They express an order that, being inserted in the historical process, opens such process to produce a new harmony, a new order. The expression of this harmony, which is called beauty, is never separated from natural environment and historical tradition, nor from utilitarian needs. Part of a definite process, architecture is therefore a synthesis of utility and beauty. Thus function is not bound by mathematical formulas corresponding to invariable functions, but is defined as a relational and processional function.

Characteristics of a place served as a source for development provided they kept a dialogue with the histories of the people who lived in that particular place and encouraged regional peculiarities of architecture - in terms of materials and technology, landscape and traditional ways of living. *Casabella continuità's* approach was to establish a relationship between the ideological level of the building and technology (materials and building methods) based on local condition. Architects like Mario Ridolfi and Ignazio Gardella tried to create architecture of integrity in their housing projects in viale Etiopia in Rome and in Alessandria respectively.⁷³ As diverse as they were, these works expressed a strong and poetic relationship with the environment which was the measurement of coherence. Furthermore, as Alfonso Gatto wrote in 'Documentario sull'architettura' in *Domus* 1953, Gardella's residential block for workers in Alessandria gained its poetry through boundaries and fulfilment - its relationships in space.⁷⁴ The point, the line, the square and rectangle initiated a relationship between the infinite and finite, black and white, the empty and full. Gatto made a parallel between the Neo-plastic artists, Van Doesburg to Mondrian, who had demonstrated how to perceive spatial construction. [fig. 9] He argued that architecture was likewise a spatial idea and a space of an idea. It was man's natural and historical reality. The complexity of Gardella's building proved that it did not rise without preconceptions. It was legitimately, or illegitimately, bound up with a strong dialogue with the environment, and had economic and technical commitments that reconstituted its limits. As such, the building represented an image of necessity, of an honest life, and inner correctness. Architecture, Gatto concluded, was a search for a common reality which enabled all human beings to free themselves from a pressing individualism and to respond to the wish to live together. Vittorio Gregotti reinforced the necessity for historical

⁷³ Carlo, G. de 'Architettura italiane' in *Casabella continuità* n. 199, 1954, pp. 19 - 34.

⁷⁴ Gatto, A. 'Documentario sull'architettura' in *Domus* n. 284, 1953, pp. 5 - 15. This was a documentary (on film) focusing on various housing projects (by Gardella and BBPR) that stood for 'the house of man' in the memory of Edoardo Persico, Giuseppe Pagano, Giuseppe Terragni, Gian Luigi Banfi and Raffaello Giolli. Initiated by Carlo Bassi and Angelo Mangiarotti, the music was by Riccardo Malipiero, text by Alfonso Gatto and direction in the hands of Angelo Mangiarotti.

Fig. 9.- 'Documentario sull'architettura' *Domus* n. 284 (1953).

The rhythm of the building is heard and felt by its projection against the sky. It is a synthesis of space and time.

awareness and cultural identity when writing of the INA houses at Cerignola by Ridolfi where the architect had made a careful study of the behaviour of future residents.⁷⁵ [fig. 10a,b] He argued that these houses managed to be clear and coherent in respect to the premises of that tradition, expressing in a living language the volumetrical environment of the Puglia countryside. But beyond this concern for culture, Gregotti believed that they were seeking, more than a coherent use of materials, contact with a world of feelings capable of expressing a precise human condition. Ridolfi succeeded in translating the increasingly important wish to "create a dialogue with the world of men" which Samonà had urged in his article 'Positivismo e storicismo nella cultura urbanistica di oggi' in *Casabella continuità* n. 200 in 1954. A dialogue which represented subtleties such as the relationship between construction and local tradition, and peculiarities that included materials, colours, orientation in terms of sun/weather all of which were important to the human condition and a way of life. Gregotti then found reason to explain this position in the light of *Casabella continuità's* ideology:

Many factors are involved in this interest in the architecture of the past; among them are the desire to rediscover old techniques and the pleasure of getting over a certain complex about old architecture. One feels especially the desire to sink one's roots deep into a tradition which helps one to define the historical qualities of his architecture.

Of course, all this can lead to certain polemics and there is always the danger of a new architectonic eclecticism which, in exchange for the enrichment of one's formal vocabulary, tempts one to break contact with present-day reality.⁷⁶

Historical revival was not the same as incorporating past architecture into new constructions. Gregotti reinforced the importance of being historically aware - to understand 'continuità' - whilst simultaneously keeping a dialogue with contemporaneity. A historical revival would only lead to a pastiche divorced of any connection with the present-day reality. The INA-casa housing scheme, Tiburtino quarter of Rome, was a further contribution to the debate on 'pre-existing environment'. Realised in collaboration between Mario Ridolfi and Ludovico Quaroni this quarter formed a definite link with the city. In his review, Federico Gorio emphasised integrity and coherence of execution within the building process:

There can be no architecture if a continuous relationship is not established between plan and execution, between design and

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⁷⁵ Gregotti, V. 'Alcuni opere di Mario Ridolfi: casa INA a Cerignola, casa di città a Terni, casa unifamiliari a Terni, palazzina in via Ventulonia a Roma' in *Casabella continuità* n. 210, 1956, p. 23 - 25.

⁷⁶ Gregotti, V. 'Alcuni opere di Mario Ridolfi: ...' in *Casabella continuità*, ibid.

construction materials, and between form and methods of realisation. This continuity, which only the designer is in a position to establish and which it is his duty to maintain, cannot be divided from the human aspect of architecture, of which it is an integral part.⁷⁷

Although not part of the physical context of the city, this urban planning followed the architects' concepts of the project which were extracted from the history of the city and the 'quartiere' became part of the city's environment at its completion. Modelled after places of popular and rural purity, the new complex was to reproduce vitality, spontaneity and humanity. The informal plan, only marginally controlled by typology, was composed of architecture rich in motifs taken from the country's traditions; from the balconies of wrought iron to the traditional roof coverings, from the window designs to the sequences of external stairs and balconies. The method of communication for a modern way of living was not straight forward. Already in 1954 Rogers had raised 'Un Appello' in *Casabella continuità* for the role of the Triennale in Milan and had argued for the complexity and urgency of contemporaneity as opposed to the past. Italian society had changed dramatically as a consequence of the war. In the early 1950's, however, architects' role still remained within the framework of confronting housing shortages and trying to heal the psychological effects that prevailed in the aftermath of the war. Fully aware of the problem, Rogers added that

... we should bear in mind that the task of the moderns to create in full awareness is more difficult than it was for those who never consciously faced such problems but solved them spontaneously by acquiring harmony through a slow evolutionary process.⁷⁸

Tradition was the underlying element that connected the collective consciousness and served as a moral instrument for the architect. According to Rogers it was not a static concept but essentially made of two forces:

One is vertical and represents the permanent rooting of phenomena in given places, the objective reason of which is consistency; the other is the circular, dynamic linking of one phenomenon with another through a shifting intellectual exchange between men.⁷⁹

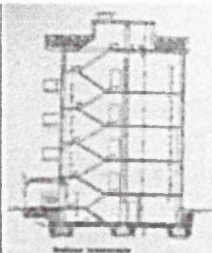
The first quality of tradition implied that tradition and history were part of people's consciousness. The second feature of tradition was, perhaps, more

⁷⁷ Gorio, F. 'Esperienze d'architettura al Tiburtino' in *Casabella continuità* n. 215, 1957.

⁷⁸ Rogers, E. N. 'Un Appello' in *Casabella continuità* n. 203, 1954, p. 1

⁷⁹ Rogers, E. N. 'Le responsabilità verso la tradizione' in *Casabella continuità* n. 202, 1954, p. 2.

Fig. 10a.- 'Alcuni opere di Mario Ridolfi: casa INA a Cerignola, casa di città a Terni, casa unifamiliari a Terni, palazzina in via Venturonia a Roma' *Casabella continuità* n. 210 (1956).
The modesty of this residential housing at Cerignola lay in its dialogue between the pre-existing environment and human scale.



In the case of the 10-story building, the design was based on the principle of a central core and a series of wings. The wings are arranged in a way that they are all connected to the central core, and they are all of the same height. This allows for a uniform design and a simple construction. The building is designed to be a multi-family housing unit, and it is intended to be a model for future housing projects.

Plan of the 10-story building.



Fig. 10b.- 'Alcuni opere di Mario Ridolfi: casa INA a Cerignola, casa di città a Terni, casa unifamiliari a Terni, palazzina in via Ventulonia a Roma' *Casabella continuità* n. 210 (1956).

receptive to the tension that rose from polemics and served as a critique of itself. Tradition was, in other words, continuously moving and shifting, subject to time, place and human condition and which was reinforced in the polemics which accelerated a transition in society. The dialogue between these two poles of tradition created strong ties between people which meant that one could not be divorced from the other. Tradition was the particular accent granted to the synthesis of a given content and form determined by the unrolling of the entire history of a people. To be able to grasp the ethos of tradition, it was necessary to study the whole history of people and not a few of its more outstanding fragments.

A much later critique was made by the architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri where he referred to 1950's architecture as a linguistic norm.⁸⁰ It used a popular terminology as a pure material, especially in the blocks personally controlled by Ridolfi which for Tafuri was an affirmation of both rage and hope. It seemed that the communication that the intellectual group of architects used was to try to know itself through its expression and its mood, a mood that for Tafuri had to be "overcome". Clearly, however, for architecture seen through the pages of *Casabella continuità*, 'modernità' was achieved not only through material means nor restricted to functional values. In order to be modern, one had to recall the past on which the future would be built. The architect had to observe small parts (physical and conceptual) and details within the urban fabric and hence understand its tradition and history. From that moment, he would be able to construct honest and true architecture, synthesising all aspects of human life and to provide the individual with an identity that was particular to him and yet rooted in a more collective cultural condition of the surroundings.

1.3.4

Going beyond the Modernist doctrine

There would be 'no orthodoxy other than heterodoxy', a title of an editorial by Rogers in 1957 ('Ortodossia dell'eterodossia' in *Casabella continuità* n. 216), which was an ideology that deviated from the "Masters" of the Modern Movement. Rogers laid down the idea in the editorial 'L'architettura moderna dopo la generazione dei Maestri' in 1956.⁸¹ Arguing against cosmopolitanism, which operated in the name of universal values and erected the same kind of buildings in New York, Rome, Tokyo and Rio, in the countryside or the city, the architect had to try to harmonise his work with the pre-existing environment whether it had been created by nature or by man's historical

⁸⁰ Tafuri, M. (1990) *History of Italian Architecture, 1944 - 1985*. The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts. London, England, p. 17 - 18.

⁸¹ Rogers, E. N. 'L'architettura moderna dopo la generazione dei Maestri' in *Casabella continuità* n. 211, 1956.

intelligence. In this editorial, Rogers argued that the character of the Masters' architecture, tried to express the functional relationship between utility and beauty inherent in the architectonic phenomenon of the times. Modern architecture expressed reality by calling things their proper names, without false pretences, circumlocution, analogies or allegories. When designing a house or a city, Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier did not borrow motives from other experiences, did not want to cheat or, beautify with superstructure. Nor did they draw out the forms from within their own memory or others. They were suggested from the lived reality for which the architects examined concrete answers to the problems that they took on. Coherence and stylistic unity were the guarantee for coherence and unity of method. More than being beautiful, their work was just, honest, consistent and real. But the work often only showed an internal coherence within the dialectical terms of the problem, possibly resolved in an artistic synthesis. It did not always correspond to the reality of other men which proved its historical limitation. Avant-garde architecture was necessarily polemical. Rogers believed that only a great man like Gropius dared to be so modest as to question the importance of actual gestures while Wright and Le Corbusier were intolerant of any human contacts despite the democratic and humanitarian protests. They left prophetic messages with Broadacre City and Ville Radieuse, beyond historical barriers. Gropius was the conscience of the Modern Movement, and our conscience. He was the creator of a method which went beyond any pre-determined schemes of traditional styles. He agreed to understand things, to be the master of the problems, and to give them a face and consequently a soul. The modern designer must take on the responsibility which was due to him and to extend Gropius's definition in all directions - he said that the historical mission of the architect had always been to materialise a complete co-ordination of all activities towards shaping man's physical environment. Rogers wanted to look at this environment not only that external to man but also that which constituted his intellectual and psychological framework. By identifying the core of the problems, one could find an explanation for their appearance.

The confines of the useful and the beautiful were ideally searched for in the infinite where one had to find the two forces that signified that energy. At the same time, one had to lean towards memory and invention which symbolised cultural modes and gave motion to these energies. Here lay the complete solution which was resolved not only in the aesthetic problem or the satisfaction of the architectonic phenomenon, but also memory was a device which anticipated a total transformation.⁸² Paci wrote in 'Fenomenologia e architettura contemporanea' that Gropius's synthesis was one of feelings and thought. The term 'feelings' needed to be given its meaning - "perception, nature, utility, economic need, social existence, distress" - and, 'thoughts' its correlative terms - "order, logic, satisfaction, expressive form, social renewal,

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⁸² Rogers, E. N. (1961) Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico, *ibid.*, p. 91.

rationality." Here emerged the significance of the Bauhaus. At the Bauhaus, technology tended to be a mediation that was transformed into the arts. It was a matter of an aesthetic education which was also social and civil. The Bauhaus was important for what remained within us. It was an education. The Bauhaus was architecture that grew and spread itself out. It was the symbol of the synthesis of historicism and "finality" of our time and the process that opened to the future. The Bauhaus represented a fundamental education that included the meeting of body and soul, life and spirit. It encompassed an everlasting education, architecture which taught architecture, dwelling which taught how to dwell, life which taught how to live. It was a dynamic meeting point between the things themselves and reason, between precision and the idea, between *Lebenswelt* and the 'intentionality' of history. A meeting, finally, which was proposed by Husserl's phenomenology.⁸³ Husserl's 'l'intenzionalità', also derived from another source that interpreted architecture, as a lived experience, an architecture which became more inclined to reason, to a more organic world. For Paci, it was found in Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture that embodied "the most authentic spirit of naturalism". It was within his architecture that one could find again "the sense of lived nature and lived space in the consciousness of life". He argued in "Wright e lo "spazio vissuto" (1959) that although Wright had often been accused of individualism, he had sensed that man was not only scientific and economic but a living organism, with soul and body.⁸⁴ 'I' was not an abstract being, but a real nomad who lived in a relationship with other nomads in a community. It was always open and had as its objective to come true in teleology; that is, in a finality of an organic society. In this living finality and daily struggle against the idolatry of geometric mechanisation and of the application of disconnecting, Wright became the master of thought and life. He was able to offer, with his architecture, an incarnation of freedom in lived space, a point of departure for a transformation and renewal of humanity. This, in relation to man and the city, brought with it large connotations. Paci argued in 'Fenomenologia e architettura contemporanea' (1958) that there was a dualism between man and nature that governed the course of civilisation.⁸⁵ The dialectic between life and spirit, past and present-future, constituted the synthesis between history and culture. A break in this synthesis was a break in the equilibrium, between civilisation, society, culture, and the arts. In short, it required a new answer, a new solution. The role of the architect was to form this synthesis between nature and history. It was not enough to experience the present and to be open minded towards the future. It was essential to maintain an organic vision of civilisation and of culture. Paci stated in the same article that the problem of modern architecture was to a large extent the problem of the true vitality of tradition, and that the problem of tradition was the problem

⁸³ Paci, E. 'Fenomenologia e architettura contemporanea' in *Relazioni e significati III*, *ibid.*, p. 193 - 195.

⁸⁴ Paci, E. 'Wright e lo "spazio vissuto"' in *Relazioni e significati III* *ibid.*, p. 205. Also published in *Casabella continuità* n. 227, 1959.

⁸⁵ Paci, E. 'Fenomenologia e architettura contemporanea' *ibid.*, p. 179.

of new horizons which must be open to the modern architecture. Echoing Eliot, the modern, the tendency towards new forms was, Paci claimed,

... l'intenzionalità' of nature and of history which renews itself because it is only with renovation that tradition is able to live in us for the present and the future. Our task is to give rebirth to the past, to make the dead talk through us with a new voice, because it is only with a new voice that they can be reborn.⁸⁶

In *Funzione delle scienze e significato dell'uomo*, Paci stressed temporal relationships that affected the conditions of man. One could never forget one's moral past, or tradition, in order to live the future:

Reflection is the life in itself that one perceives in its transformation. Taking the present back to the past, recalling the forgotten, reliving it. In other words, to picture the future, modifications of the present are enclosed in the boundaries of time in which reflection is rooted.⁸⁷

With conscious meditation man was able to foresee the future by making connections between past and present and learning from lived experiences. Life was dependent upon man's condition. What happened in the world did not only belong to the world as an abstract universe but also to man as a particular being. The environment - the Husserlian *Umwelt* to which Paci was receptive - was not only what allowed the constitution of the thing (it gave it the space for acquiring its sense), but, was also foundational element of all inter-subjectivity. It was the place in which subjects and things could be put into relationship without any prejudice.⁸⁸ The architect, envisioned by Ernesto Rogers, ideally took up Gropius's position of adopting a moral responsibility spanning the whole of society. What was particular to the Italian approach, however was the architect's attempt to renew man's interrelationships and connect his origins with the past-present and present-future of the collective society. His tools to attain that goal lay in the dialectic between tradition and renewal, where the relationship gained subsistence between human beings, between groups, and between people. This principal thought of subjectivity deviated from the Modernist doctrine and yet was partially felt in the integrity of Alvar Aalto's architecture, an architect who for Rogers was

... not only the best Finnish architect... but also the best Italian architect (because so far none of us have penetrated so deeply into the roots of our ancient art): his aesthetic synthesises the

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⁸⁶ Paci, E. 'Fenomenologia e architettura contemporanea' Ibid., p. 183.

⁸⁷ Paci, E. *Funzione delle scienze e significato dell'uomo*. Quoted from Gregotti, V. 'Ricordo di Enzo Paci' (In memory of Enzo Paci) in *Casabella* 523, 1986. Rivista internazionale di architettura. Gruppo Electa s.p.a. Milano. p. 3.

⁸⁸ Gregotti, V. "Ricordo di Enzo Paci" (In memory of Enzo Paci) in *Casabella* 523, 1986, p. 3.

spontaneous Finnish traditions and the rather more complex tradition he assimilated in Italy; he had closed the vast circle of tradition in terms of a precise architecture.⁸⁹

For the Italian architect every part, object and human being were relative to each other. This had to be taken into consideration when designing for the built environment. Every element was conditioned by another whether existing in the past or the present. In that sense there was no orthodoxy for Italian architects other than heterodoxy because of their different characters and backgrounds. An universal value lay therefore in the method rather than in the result.

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⁸⁹ Rogers, E. N. 'Le responsabilità verso la tradizione' in *Casabella continuità* n. 202, 1954, p. 1.

1.4

The memory of the past is re-defined in the context of the present

1.4.1

Composing physical and temporal elements from the past is meditated in museum settings

In the context of re-constructing the past, museum designs were in direct contact with the concept of historical consciousness and articulated a wish to bring the past to contemporaneity. Manfredo Tafuri in *History of Italian Architecture, 1944 - 1985* has argued that

... in designing "houses of art," the best Italian architects undoubtedly unleashed otherwise repressed aspirations: here their relationship with history was obligatory and direct, and strictly intertwined with pedagogical duties. Museum architecture seemed to sum up the principal themes of the fifties, now cleansed of unnecessary appurtenances. These themes ranged from the "civil" role of form to the encounter between memory and innovation, to the recovery of modes of representation associated with special occasions.⁹⁰

The question of how to evoke the memory of the past and represent its spiritual values in new museums was a contextual one. In the case of Ignazio

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⁹⁰ Tafuri, M. (1990) *ibid.* p. 49.

Gardella's Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Milano, Giulio Carlo Argan wrote in 'L'architettura del museo' published in *Casabella continuità* (1954) that the principal matter of designing a museum interior was to obtain a space that would be perfectly defined and articulated according to one or more modules. [fig. 11] A sense of unity of the surroundings and the partitions should, however, be maintained because otherwise the place would become monotonous and be an indifferent series of boxes. In other words, Argan argued, museum architecture was, above all, an "empty" architecture but it was imperative that this emptiness received a formal condition, and become "a space".⁹¹ In representing the memory of the past, Gardella offered an unity between the different rooms in the interior space, the building and surroundings which again was reflected in the harmony of the displayed art works. The richness of design was found in the spatial atmosphere and flexibility rather than in the wish to create a fixed premise for communication between the past and present.

Franco Albini's spatial conceptions for his museum designs in Genoa (Palazzo Bianco 1950 - 1951, Palazzo Rosso 1952 - 1961, and Museum of San Lorenzo 1952 - 1956) showed that space obtained a physical substance and texture that conditioned its shape. A dialogue of interference characterised the relationship between the displayed objects and composition of space. That is, his use of the dialectic between spaces, variations of light, the dialogue between the glass cases and the ambiguous suggestiveness of the interconnected organisms seen through the glass expressed unique devices for his poetical architecture. Reviewing an office building by Albini in the article 'La sede dell'INA a Parma' (1954), Eugenio Gentili used the same vocabulary to describe Albini's method of design as in his museum arrangements. He emphasised that from Albini's interpretation of space as a material of composition, in his wish to define, shape and distinguish it, other elements were reduced to pure geometric symbols in the physical reality and made more subtle. Considering this, Albini's method had an affinity with the realm of the artisan.⁹² Both made a thorough study of every material, system and structural detail and, particular application, to reach their ultimate limits before breaking point. Here the respect for a mutual setting for tradition and innovation - the historical consciousness - was put into practice in the actual building method; the artisan and the architect. In his review of Albini's work in 'Franco Albini e la cultura architettonica in Italia' published in *Zodiac* in 1958, Giuseppe Samonà argued that Albini's method reached an artisan-like simplicity in his formal investigation of every part of the space, of its various articulations and structures, its fixed joints, and the wrappings of suspensions and supports. The result was a distinct clarity of work that stood against the natural elegance of the sign which each object represented and formed and thereby, articulated the interrelationships and complexity of human existence that lay in

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⁹¹ Argan, G. C. 'L'architettura del museo' in *Casabella continuità* n. 202, 1954, p. V.

⁹² Gentili, E. 'La sede dell'INA a Parma' in *Casabella continuità* n. 200, 1954, pp. 25 - 31.

reconstructing the past.⁹³ In his work there was a great sense of a rhythmical intensity that was expressed in the play of horizontal and vertical frames. His spaces were full of life because the various depths depended on the logic of the theme. [fig. 12a,b] These were made meaningful by a richness of perspectives of multiple dimensions which yet, maintained a moderation within the formal lay-out. The vertical and horizontal lines that run through the space were the parameters of this modular intensity. Screens rarely separated the space into distinctive zones and eliminated transparency, as there was a poetic need for co-ordinating extensions and multiplication of meeting points. Samonà had already made the point about the dialectic of space in 'Un contributo alla museografia' (1956) in *Casabella continuità* where he favourably reviewed the work of BBPR at the Museum of Castello Sforzesco in Milan (1954 - 1956). Here he argued that an idea of a museum environment where only the work of art was visible and the rest made unnoticeable to the visitor, represented almost a paradox to the historical and technological culture denying all the old and new architecture of museums. [fig. 13a,b] The spiritual values of the work of art revealed themselves clearly at the moment when space and the represented object were set in equilibrium. In this way, Samonà continued, the environment expressed more explicitly the signs of a particular method of museology by communicating the desired effects wished for in the determined arrangement. The attention given to the heterogeneous work of the museum environment had to be measured against the characteristics of the subject and the diverse artistic levels. In that sense, reciprocal co-ordination and more adaptable arrangements had to be studied. The interior of the exhibition space should be more alive, so the huge space did not appear empty but in a proportioned harmony.⁹⁴

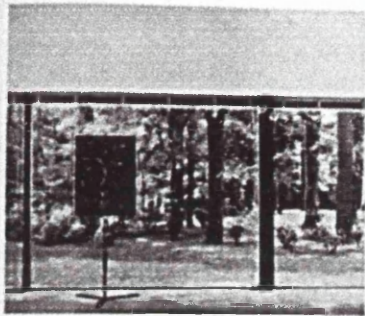
Contemplating works of the past, one admired these works as an expression of a life far away from us. The memory of the dead was given a new voice within the museum space. It tried to recreate a setting that responded to the need of the past for a new mediator enabling it to voice its history in a dialogue. The reconstruction of memory in the museum followed the same way of thinking as when sensations and objects evoked the memory in a house or gave a meaning to a space. It was a way of communicating the recognisable. Configuring the notion of history, Tafuri argued that

... whether the "field" was a museum or a city, history assumed its character through intervention in the form of projects; the many legacies combined in a project gave rise to contaminations, to works that were in some way "dirty." But it was impurity that made the "game of recognition" possible. Architecture, tainted by ancient artefacts, recognized the

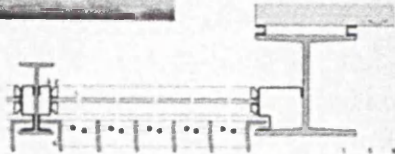
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⁹³ Samonà, G. 'Franco Albini e la cultura architettonica in Italia' in *Zodiac* 3, 1958, Milano, pp. 88 - 93.

⁹⁴ Samonà, G. 'Un contributo alla museografia' in *Casabella continuità* n. 211, 1956, pp. 51 - 63.



Trasparenza, quella che si crea con l'uso di pareti e vetrate
che, nella sezione (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z, AA, AB, AC, AD, AE, AF, AG, AH, AI, AJ, AK, AL, AM, AN, AO, AP, AQ, AR, AS, AT, AU, AV, AW, AX, AY, AZ, BA, BB, BC, BD, BE, BF, BG, BH, BI, BJ, BK, BL, BM, BN, BO, BP, BQ, BR, BS, BT, BU, BV, BW, BX, BY, BZ, CA, CB, CC, CD, CE, CF, CG, CH, CI, CJ, CK, CL, CM, CN, CO, CP, CQ, CR, CS, CT, CU, CV, CW, CX, CY, CZ, DA, DB, DC, DD, DE, DF, DG, DH, DI, DJ, DK, DL, DM, DN, DO, DP, DQ, DR, DS, DT, DU, DV, DW, DX, DY, DZ, EA, EB, EC, ED, EE, EF, EG, EH, EI, EJ, EK, EL, EM, EN, EO, EP, EQ, ER, ES, ET, EU, EV, EW, EX, EY, EZ, FA, FB, FC, FD, FE, FF, FG, FH, FI, FJ, FK, FL, FM, FN, FO, FP, FQ, FR, FS, FT, FU, FV, FW, FX, FY, FZ, GA, GB, GC, GD, GE, GF, GG, GH, GI, GJ, GK, GL, GM, GN, GO, GP, GQ, GR, GS, GT, GU, GV, GW, GX, GY, GZ, HA, HB, HC, HD, HE, HF, HG, HH, HI, HJ, HK, HL, HM, HN, HO, HP, HQ, HR, HS, HT, HU, HV, HW, HX, HY, HZ, IA, IB, IC, ID, IE, IF, IG, IH, II, IJ, IK, IL, IM, IN, IO, IP, IQ, IR, IS, IT, IU, IV, IW, IX, IY, IZ, JA, JB, JC, JD, JE, JF, JG, JH, JI, JJ, JK, JL, JM, JN, JO, JP, JQ, JR, JS, JT, JU, JV, JW, JX, JY, JZ, KA, KB, KC, KD, KE, KF, KG, KH, KI, KJ, KK, KL, KM, KN, KO, KP, KQ, KR, KS, KT, KU, KV, KW, KX, KY, KZ, LA, LB, LC, LD, LE, LF, LG, LH, LI, LJ, LK, LL, LM, LN, LO, LP, LQ, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, LW, LX, LY, LZ, MA, MB, MC, MD, ME, MF, MG, MH, MI, MJ, MK, ML, MM, MN, MO, MP, MQ, MR, MS, MT, MU, MV, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NB, NC, ND, NE, NF, NG, NH, NI, NJ, NK, NL, NM, NN, NO, NP, NQ, NR, NS, NT, NU, NV, NW, NX, NY, NZ, OA, OB, OC, OD, OE, OF, OG, OH, OI, OJ, OK, OL, OM, ON, OO, OP, OQ, OR, OS, OT, OU, OV, OW, OX, OY, OZ, PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, PF, PG, PH, PI, PJ, PK, PL, PM, PN, PO, PP, PQ, PR, PS, PT, PU, PV, PW, PX, PY, PZ, QA, QB, QC, QD, QE, QF, QG, QH, QI, QJ, QK, QL, QM, QN, QO, QP, QQ, QR, QS, QT, QU, QV, QW, QX, QY, QZ, RA, RB, RC, RD, RE, RF, RG, RH, RI, RJ, RK, RL, RM, RN, RO, RP, RQ, RR, RS, RT, RU, RV, RW, RX, RY, RZ, SA, SB, SC, SD, SE, SF, SG, SH, SI, SJ, SK, SL, SM, SN, SO, SP, SQ, SR, SS, ST, SU, SV, SW, SX, SY, SZ, TA, TB, TC, TD, TE, TF, TG, TH, TI, TJ, TK, TL, TM, TN, TO, TP, TQ, TR, TS, TT, TU, TV, TW, TX, TY, TZ, UA, UB, UC, UD, UE, UF, UG, UH, UI, UJ, UK, UL, UM, UN, UO, UP, UQ, UR, US, UT, UY, UZ, VA, VB, VC, VD, VE, VF, VG, VH, VI, VJ, VK, VL, VM, VN, VO, VP, VQ, VR, VS, VT, VU, VV, VW, VX, VY, VZ, WA, WB, WC, WD, WE, WF, WG, WH, WI, WJ, WK, WL, WM, WN, WO, WP, WQ, WR, WS, WT, WU, WV, WW, WX, WY, WZ, XA, XB, XC, XD, XE, XF, XG, XH, XI, XJ, XK, XL, XM, XN, XO, XP, XQ, XR, XS, XT, XU, XV, XW, XX, XY, XZ, YA, YB, YC, YD, YE, YF, YG, YH, YI, YJ, YK, YL, YM, YN, YO, YP, YQ, YR, YS, YT, YU, YV, YW, YX, YY, YZ, ZA, ZB, ZC, ZD, ZE, ZF, ZG, ZH, ZI, ZJ, ZK, ZL, ZM, ZN, ZO, ZP, ZQ, ZR, ZS, ZT, ZU, ZV, ZW, ZX, ZY, ZZ.



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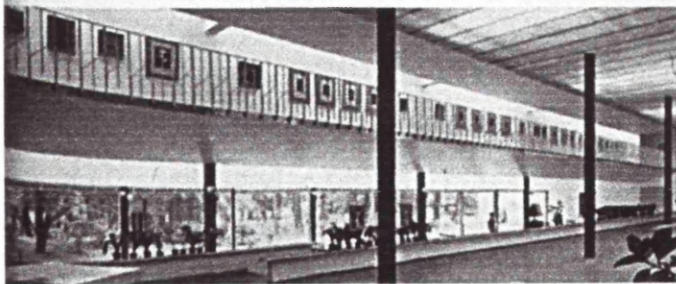


Fig. 11.- 'L'architettura del museo' Casabella continuità n. 202 (1954).
In this gallery space, Gardella forms a synthesis between nature and history placing the visitor in the midst of that equilibrium.

Fig. 12a.-'Franco Albini e la cultura architettonica in Italia' *Zodiaco* 3 (1958).

At the treasury museum of San Lorenzo in Genoa, the visitor not only experiences the work of art but also the full rhythm of space and unexpected play of linear dimensions. The displayed work of art and the building itself are therefore fully aware of each other.

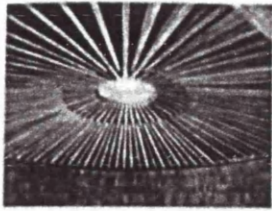


Fig. 12b.- 'Franco Albini e la cultura architettonica in Italia' *Zodiac* 3 (1958).

Fig. 13.- 'Un contributo alla museografia' Casabella continuità n. 211 (1956).
The visitor of the museum is absorbed into the represented scene of history and becomes a participant in the interplay between the past, present and future - roles played by the displayed objects, the interior architectural space and the visitor himself.

legitimacy of its own tradition. These artefacts could, in fact, use the "new" as a kind of litmus paper, as a questioning mirror that could provide a principium individuationis.⁹⁵

In the Museo del Castello, BBPR scheme presented a complete and powerful scenery that introduced - in the medieval street pavement of the Sala degli Scarlioni and the 'fence' of the Sala delle Asse, in the dreamlike placement of armaments in the Sala Verde and the protective display of the Pietà Rondanini - multivalent resonances between the pieces exhibited and the exhibition architecture. The installation manifested a concern of how to communicate, how to project the relationship between private and collective memory through the "game of recognition". The problem was in the hands of the intellectual architect - how to reveal his private memory, a memory that seemed to want to keep and render all his felt obligations to the collective memory.

1.4.2

A quest for 'liberty'

In his editorial 'Continuità o crisis?' in *Casabella continuità* n. 215, 1957, Rogers raised the question of methodology and related it to the problem of 'continuità', tradition, and the pre-existing environment, as well as wanted to establish with it a language of communication and to achieve an increase in values of quality. These values derived from a spatial-temporal concept which Rogers paraphrased in a sentence by Ortega y Gasset who stated that the isolated individual was an abstraction. The life of the individual consisted, precisely, of an expression that rose from the masses. For this reason it was not possible to separate the heroes from the masses. It was a question of an essential dualism to the historical process. In the same editorial Rogers questioned the premises for a 'continuità', or whether a complete break had to take place from the Modern Movement. For him, the legacy of the masters of the Modern Movement had to be defended on the grounds of recognising the expression of a method rather than figurative appearances. This method sought to establish

... new and clearer relations between content and form within the phenomenology of a pragmatic and open process, a process which, as it rejects every kind of a priori dogmatism, cannot be judged according to such schemes.⁹⁶

Using history as building material the architect must go deep into tradition and not cease just below the surface by bringing forms back to our memory.

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⁹⁵ Tafuri, M. (1990) *ibid.*, p. 51.

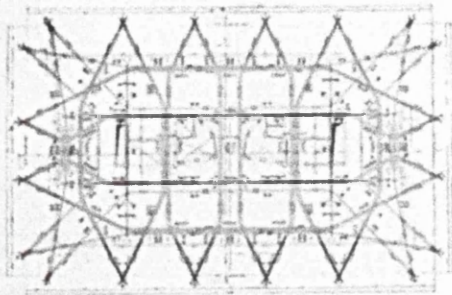
⁹⁶ Rogers, E. N. 'Continuità o crisis?' in *Casabella continuità* n. 215, 1957, pp. 3-4.

They have to be developed and become signs that enrich the language of communication. History would become a living language because pastiche and imitation were unable to offer either progress or comments on the present-future. Paci, in writing about Torre Velasca (1950/51 to 1958) in *Zodiac* (1959), elucidated the obligation of the architect towards the collective memory. The dialectics of the building lay in the resonances of that collectivity. That is,

... a modern technique which wishes to fully inherit the patrimony of rationalism seeks to recall (not to repeat), in modern forms a tradition, without discarding severity of method. This is certainly not a "revival", but rather the will to create, a technical artistic-cultural synthesis. Fundamentally, the problem of the *Torre Velasca* is that of synthesising rationality and environment, technique and history, scientific universality and regional urban reality; a problem characteristic of all contemporary culture.⁹⁷ [Paci's italics]

Torre Velasca, like the Castello Sforzesco Museum, was intended to awake people's consciousness towards the past, or lost times ('temps perdu'); to teach them how to look at the past, in order to obtain a subjective experience that would generate a part in a collective epoch. In other words, the fragments which composed these two works by BBPR encouraged people to seek assurance that yet was continuously put into crisis. Torre Velasca recaptured something of the spiritual values of a medieval city. Seen from the top of the Duomo, the tower salutes the city as a skyscraper, whereas the shops on the ground floor of Torre Velasca recapture the sense of a curved medieval street scene. The standardised windows are irregularly composed recalling the history of the site, that is the typology of a medieval street. [fig. 14a,b] By re-interpreting the historical city and particularly the medieval tower as a recognisable type for a skyscraper, Torre Velasca was conceived as one of the organs that supported the operation of the city. This was most clearly felt when analysing the composition of windows, both in the medieval tower and the Velasca. The allocation of windows of the medieval tower was perceived from the inside according to the typology of the interior like for instance, the staircase and the different function of rooms. The reason for the shape, size and quantity of the windows lay in possibilities that the material offered the building structure. They were small and narrow yet highly functional. Torre Velasca emphasised its mural character. Walls are opaque rather than transparent. One could say that the Velasca tower retains a respect for the interior of the city at the price of the typology of the flats and offices as there is no obvious distinction made visible from the outside. It is within the city where the life of the Italian is enjoyed. In this way the Italian approach towards modernity denied the modernist idea that form follows function. The

⁹⁷ Paci, E. 'Continuità e coerenza dei BBPR' ('Continuity and unity of BBPR') in *Zodiac* 4, 1959, p. 205 (trans.) (pp. 82-116 original).



11. P. generale per 1961 e abbinato in Piano V:
Sala e ufficio 1961-62. Cattedra della cattedra di
Architettura.

12. P.111 Piano della Torre Velasca. Disposizione dei
Piani. 1961-62.
13. Dettaglio dell'intersezione sopra l'ingresso.
14. Sezione della parte superiore con la planimetria.



Fig. 14a.- 'Continuità e coerenza' *Zodiaco* 4 (1959).
Placed in the sensitive surrounding near the Duomo in Milan, Torre Velasca recalls the past in order to build its own future while it enriches the urban experience of the citizen.

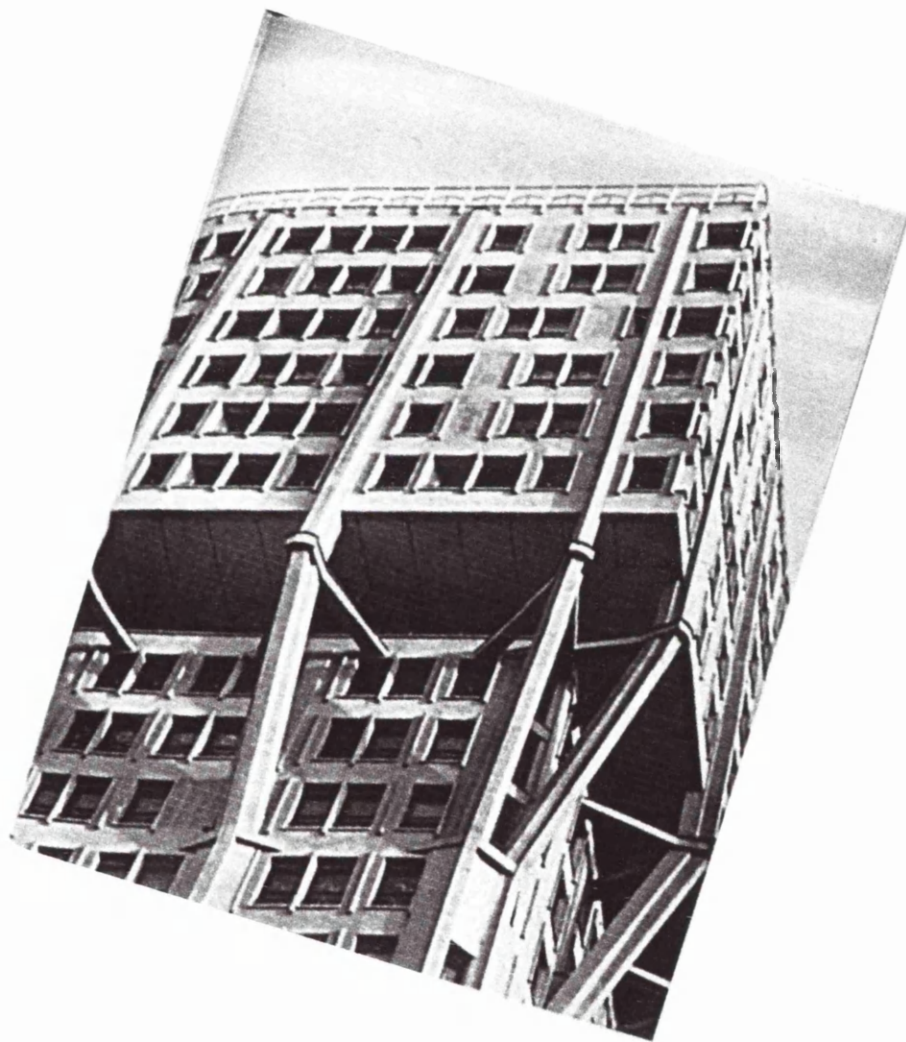


Fig. 14b.- 'Continuità e coerenza' Zodiac 4 (1959).

city required a visual acknowledgement that engaged in Rogers's trilogy, form-function-beauty. As such, its ability to communicate focused on the collective culture of the citizen rather than the private memory of the inhabitant of the building. The memory of the medieval tower created symbols of contemporary existence. Torre Velasca meant to demonstrate that all progress could only be based on the renewed values of history and the goal of realising a unity of concept for the creation of form. However, the particular attitude to communication became precisely the point of attack by architects on the international scene. As for Gio Ponti, he "loved" the Torre Velasca for the architectural creativity that it represented, but he found

... that the Velasca Tower has created ..., through its peremptory mass and peculiar form, an environment for itself, indeed and environment of its *own*, autonomous, and non-communicating, rather than submitting to or interpreting its surroundings. And so my imagination leaped to the *environmental creations* that the Velasca Tower could stimulate...⁹⁸ [Ponti's italics]

When the tower was presented by Rogers at the CIAM meeting in Otterlo in 1959, he had to defend the project against harsh criticism from CIAM's members, especially Jacob Bakema and the Smithsons. Both criticised the building for belonging to another time. Smithson suggested that the building

... does not live in the same world as the artefacts of our day because the plastic language it speaks is of another time.

Similarly, Bakema stated

... that form is a communication about life, and I don't recognize in this building a communication about life in our time. You are resisting contemporary life.⁹⁹

Rogers then responded,

... when I speak about the past and tradition, and when I speak about the building's life being connected with the past, it is not intended that this be an imitation of the forms of the past. ... Our main purpose was to give this building the intimate value of our culture - the essence of history -, we were never given to imitating the shapes and forms of the past, only understanding what has happened before us. This building is a sky-scraper in the very centre of Milan, five hundred metres from the Cathedral. It is at Milan's very historical centre and we found it necessary

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⁹⁸ Ponti, G. 'Existing environment and creation of the environment' in *Domus* n. 378, 1961.

⁹⁹ Smithson, P. and Bakema in Ernesto Rogers 'Milano/Italia' in Jürgen Joedicke (ed.) (1961) *Documents of Modern Architecture. CIAM '59 in Otterlo*. Group for the research of social and visual inter-relationships. Alec Tiranti Ltd. London, p. 97

that our building breath the atmosphere of the place and even intensify it.¹⁰⁰

This path was not only taken by the BBPR, but also by Ignazio Gardella in his house on the Zattere in Venice completed in 1958.¹⁰¹ [fig. 15] With its calculated asymmetry, its notched details, and a facade presented as a commentary on the typology of the Venetian aristocratic palazzo, the house clearly sought a dialogue with its exceptional location. It mirrored the pictorial values of Venetian architecture with its play of light and shadow reminiscent of the forms reflected in the water of the canals. He followed the same rhetoric as Rogers and Paci at *Casabella continuità* where the present signified the two dimensions of non-present time (the past and the future) which were joined together by a secret kinship of which the present was the link for an architecture of 'today'. To assume this value of a link, architecture must embody the conscious presence of the past in the perspective of the future; conscious because memory was, and must be, an act of criticism. History, memory, tradition, consistency, and 'continuità' did not mean static immobility but, on the contrary, they formed the dynamic 'continuum'.

These buildings became a subject of an international debate published in the highly respected English *Architectural Review* that the English architectural critic, Reyner Banham called the "Italian retreat from Modern Movement", "an infantile regression". He believed that the only valid justification for

... reviving anything in the arts is that the reviver finds himself culturally in a position analogous to that of the time he seeks to revive...

Banham explained.

The performance of the revolutionaries [founded on the domestic revolution of 1907] may not have matched their promise, but the promise remains and is real. It is the promise of liberty, not *Liberty* or 'Neoliberty', the promise of freedom from having to wear the discarded clothes of previous cultures, even if those previous cultures have the air of *tempi felici*. To want to put on those old clothes again is to be, in Marinetti's words describing Ruskin, like a man who has attained full physical maturity, yet wants to sleep in his cot again, to be suckled again by his decrepit nurse, in order to regain the nonchalance of his childhood. Even by the purely local standards of Milan and

¹⁰⁰ Rogers, E.N. 'Milano/Italia' in Jürgen Joedicke (ed.) (1961). Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁰¹ An article appeared in *Casabella continuità* in n. 220, 1958 by Giuseppe Samonà 'Una casa di Gardella a Venezia', pp. 7 - 15.



Fig. 15.- 'Una casa di Gardella a Venezia' *Casabella continuità* n. 220 (1958).
The simple forms and balconies of the facade communicate with the water and the adjacent buildings. In that way the building offers an urban modesty that still keeps its own identity.

The Bottega d'Erasmus building by the Turin architects, Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro d'Isola, was also included in Banham's attack on Italian modernism. In the article 'L'impegno della tradizione' in *Casabella continuità* n. 215, 1957, the architects explained their work, and stated that their work never proposed a typology. They never repeated themselves. Each act was thought of as conclusive and born from the fertilisation of its own hypothesis. Neither did they maintain a definite attitude towards the past, or present but preferred to think of the present as an isolated moment to give to their research.¹⁰³ [fig. 16a,b] Gregotti answered this letter, published in the same issue, and although being positive he confirmed his doubts of the finished project in terms of the treatment of certain local motives. Rogers himself furthered the criticism and rejected the superficiality of formalism that imitated history without understanding what was behind it. To fall into formalism was to imitate history in its figurative language. This was an "anti-historical" way that he believed that Gabetti and d'Isola had fallen into

... not only because no attempt is made to understand this language in the terms which had justified it when it was developed, but also because no account is taken of the fact that our age, in producing new content, necessarily produces a variety of new forms.¹⁰⁴

Although Neo-Liberty tried to challenge the modernist tradition in the need to anchor present experience, it was always clear to Rogers that his concept of 'continuità' was a 'continuum' of the Modern Movement and not a crisis, or a breaking point. 'Continuità' was not about appearance, or a style, - in response to Banham's citing of Ruskin wanting to dress in old cloths. One had to look for the reasons for things that may lay deep in society. The polemic that Banham triggered in the *Architectural Review* with his famous article has to be valued for its intensity. Architects all over the world followed the dispute in the two magazines, the *Architectural Review* and *Casabella continuità*, a debate which helped architects to respond to architectural problems within contextual settings and to work out a continuation of the theories of the Modern Movement. It seems, however, that Banham did not fully understand Rogers's way of thinking. Rogers responded in such terms in 'The Evolution of Architecture: Reply to the Custodian of Frigidaires' in *Casabella continuità* n. 228, 1959:

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¹⁰² Banham, R. 'Neoliberty, The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture' in *Architectural Review*, vol. 125, n. 747, April 1959. p. 235. Later in the same year, vol. 126 n. 754, December 1959, the *Architectural Review* published 'Neoliberty: the Debate' where international figures in architecture responded to Banham's previous article.

¹⁰³ Gabetti, R. and d'Isola A. 'L'impegno della tradizione' in *Casabella continuità* n. 215, 1957.

¹⁰⁴ Rogers, E. N. 'Continuità o crisi?' in *Casabella Continuità* n. 215, 1957, p. 4.

For us ... the modern movement is not dead at all: our modernity is really in carrying forward the tradition of the Masters (including Wright). But to be sensitive to the beautiful (and not only the value of documenting it) in some manifestations that are no longer sufficiently appreciated is certainly a respectable position. And likewise, it is respectable to historicize and update certain values left hanging because of the need for other struggles.

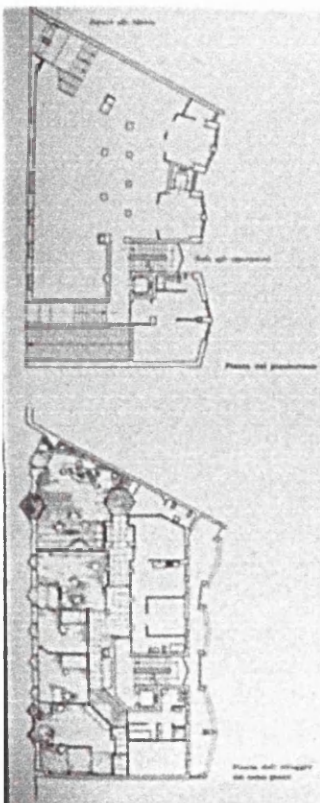
...

Banham ought to have recognized in a subtler manner ... the continuous dramatic struggle of culture in general against the contingencies of Italian society (before, during, and after fascism); from this he would have had to infer the difficulty of identifying art with life: the dialectical relationship, the persistent lovers' quarrel, the conquests, the misunderstandings, the rejections, the redemptions. Then he would have intuited one of the most interesting aspects of our history: precisely that Italian architecture, in its authentic examples, is a moral act and, at least implicitly, an instrument of political struggle, alternating successes with failures, as in the entire political history of Italian progressive tendencies, but certainly not for this reason worthless or condemnable.¹⁰⁵

There was a cultural need for a tension that served as a catalyst for creativity in the architectural practice. In order to be able to build a contemporary structure, the architect looked at details of an old building and acquired a knowledge of its methodology towards the finished form. Only then would he be able to use his knowledge and create a tension and dialogue between the past and present which would predict the future. The question remained how the past was translated and what values of memory were recovered. Reviewing this atmosphere less than ten years later, Tafuri criticised "the real drama" of Neo-Liberty for its lack of courage. He maintained that

Neo-Liberty has not rescued history, but only the arbitrary right to flirt with it, in the most hidden corners of its 'familiar lexicons'. As an expression of uneasiness, neo-Liberty had been too cautious; as a symptom of the will to sound the dialectic of contemporary architecture, it has left its task unfinished, running only calculated risks on the lines of provincial polemics. The failure of neo-Liberty has then a symptomatic value: it expresses the impossibility of returning the objects into

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¹⁰⁵ Rogers, E. N. 'The Evolution of Architecture: Reply to the Custodian of Frigidaires' in *Casabella continuità* n. 228, 1959, pp 2-4. Also published in Ockman, J. (1993) *Architecture Culture 1943 - 1968. A Documentary Anthology*. Rizzoli New York from where this quote is taken p. 303 - 305.



Roberto Gualtieri e Alberto Fina
A sinistra: il Palazzo della Regione di Torino
A destra: il Palazzo della Regione di Torino
A sinistra: il Palazzo della Regione di Torino
A destra: il Palazzo della Regione di Torino

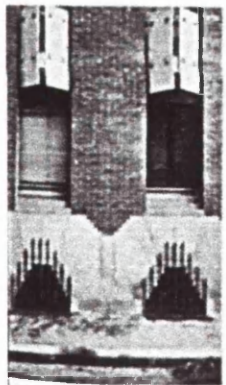
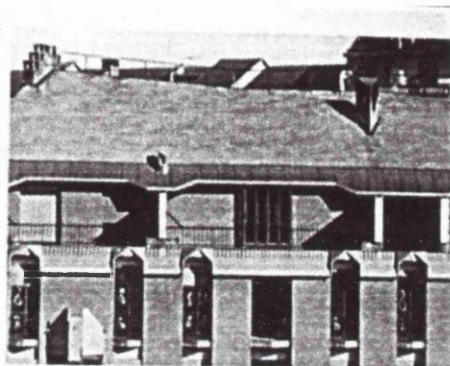
Roberto Gualtieri e Alberto Fina
Vincenzo Bagnoli

L'impegno della tradizione

Con Gualtieri
L'edificio realizzato per parte del
governo e per quello della Regione di
Torino in forma di una struttura
monocivica e moderna, forse in
grado di dare un'idea concreta
dell'architettura moderna in Italia.
L'edificio, realizzato in stile
contemporaneo, è stato
realizzato in stile moderno e
contemporaneo, in stile
contemporaneo e moderno.
L'edificio, realizzato in stile
contemporaneo, è stato
realizzato in stile moderno e
contemporaneo, in stile
contemporaneo e moderno.
L'edificio, realizzato in stile
contemporaneo, è stato
realizzato in stile moderno e
contemporaneo, in stile
contemporaneo e moderno.

Il Palazzo della Regione di Torino
è un edificio moderno e
contemporaneo, in stile
contemporaneo e moderno.
L'edificio, realizzato in stile
contemporaneo, è stato
realizzato in stile moderno e
contemporaneo, in stile
contemporaneo e moderno.
L'edificio, realizzato in stile
contemporaneo, è stato
realizzato in stile moderno e
contemporaneo, in stile
contemporaneo e moderno.
L'edificio, realizzato in stile
contemporaneo, è stato
realizzato in stile moderno e
contemporaneo, in stile
contemporaneo e moderno.

Fig. 16a.- 'L'impegno della tradizione' Casabella continuità n. 215 (1957).
The formalistic composition of stylistic and decorative features reject the 'proof' of origin.



1996, p. 416). We should appreciate in this paper the lack of attention to the fact that the concept of a community may be understood in different ways. For example, the concept may be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common identity, or in terms of a group of people who share a common interest, or in terms of a group of people who share a common location. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common culture, or in terms of a group of people who share a common language, or in terms of a group of people who share a common religion. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common history, or in terms of a group of people who share a common future, or in terms of a group of people who share a common destiny. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common purpose, or in terms of a group of people who share a common goal, or in terms of a group of people who share a common vision. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common values, or in terms of a group of people who share a common beliefs, or in terms of a group of people who share a common attitudes. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common behaviors, or in terms of a group of people who share a common customs, or in terms of a group of people who share a common traditions. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common symbols, or in terms of a group of people who share a common rituals, or in terms of a group of people who share a common ceremonies. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common myths, or in terms of a group of people who share a common legends, or in terms of a group of people who share a common stories. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common songs, or in terms of a group of people who share a common dances, or in terms of a group of people who share a common games. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common sports, or in terms of a group of people who share a common hobbies, or in terms of a group of people who share a common interests. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common passions, or in terms of a group of people who share a common fears, or in terms of a group of people who share a common hopes. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common dreams, or in terms of a group of people who share a common aspirations, or in terms of a group of people who share a common ambitions. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common values, or in terms of a group of people who share a common beliefs, or in terms of a group of people who share a common attitudes. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common behaviors, or in terms of a group of people who share a common customs, or in terms of a group of people who share a common traditions. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common symbols, or in terms of a group of people who share a common rituals, or in terms of a group of people who share a common ceremonies. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common myths, or in terms of a group of people who share a common legends, or in terms of a group of people who share a common stories. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common songs, or in terms of a group of people who share a common dances, or in terms of a group of people who share a common games. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common sports, or in terms of a group of people who share a common hobbies, or in terms of a group of people who share a common interests. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common passions, or in terms of a group of people who share a common fears, or in terms of a group of people who share a common hopes. The concept of a community may also be understood in terms of a group of people who share a common dreams, or in terms of a group of people who share a common aspirations, or in terms of a group of people who share a common ambitions.



Fig. 16b.- 'L'impegno della tradizione' Casabella continuità n. 215 (1957).

The risk lay in turning architecture into an autobiographical interpretation of history based on emotions and nostalgia. Recovering the values of memory had to remain within the structure of an enrichment of the present rather than searching for a new language. In so arguing, the Italian approach towards modernity threatened the thrust of the Modernist doctrine which, explicitly or implicitly was predicted exclusively on the future, a teleology of architecture drawn fundamentally from the machine and technology. The Italian project was, on the contrary, never considered complete because its measuring scale was balanced on the human sentiment as well as man's material world, both of which were in constant fluctuation and evolution.

1.4.3

The skyscraper provides a new image of the city

Within the concept of the city and its characteristics, a skyscraper took on a particular aspect of the city and brought about a unique relationship between them. The city was conscious of its skyscraper and reciprocally, the skyscraper enjoyed a panoramic view of the city and its changing condition. In some respects this relationship recalled a nostalgia for a sensation achieved in New York city to which Ponti referred in 1952, liking skyscrapers close to one another as in a bristling city or an American fairy tale. Skyscrapers furthermore prompted Ponti to speak more of the sky and the city than of the architecture, penetrating into the sky with perfect building machines, over the silver surfaces the sky will move, with its clouds.¹⁰⁷ Thus the feeling for the city changed to an image - of a dream-like picture that yet was in reality created by man. Penetrating into the sky, the Pirelli tower was particularly successful. Designed by Ponti and his team which included A. Fornaroli, A. Rosselli, G. Valtolina, E. Dell'Orto and for the structure, Pier Luigi Nervi, this skyscraper represented an individual statement that served as a monument and a symbol for the city of Milan. The Tower stands against the Fascist and heavy decorative railway station, Stazione Centrale, with its slender body and delicate lines. By means of its location, it symbolised multiple aspects of urban life for the migrants like, modernity and the economic miracle, as well as expressing openness for international and traditional values.

Ponti's own representation of the skyscraper, depicted it as a free standing sculpture in the city having its own life.¹⁰⁸ His article 'Espressione dell'edificio' (1956) illustrated various stages of the project, models of the

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¹⁰⁶ Tafuri, M. (1980) *ibid.* p. 51.

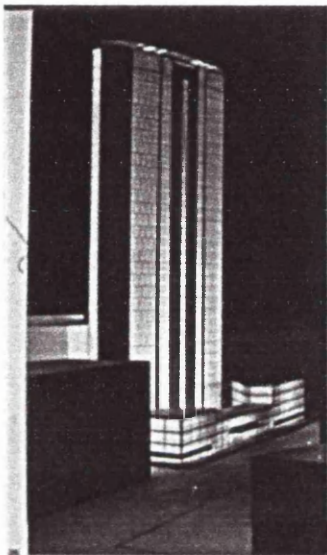
¹⁰⁷ Ponti, G. 'Favola americana' in *Domus* n. 272, 1952, pp. 6- 11.

¹⁰⁸ Ponti, G. 'Espressione dell'edificio' in *Domus* n. 316, 1956, pp. 1-15.

building and different perspectives, as well as structural drawings and sections. The chiaroscuro of the model was drawn out explicitly with the use of lighting in order to provide views from different parts of the day, and night that interpreted the building's two distinctive lives, both equally important for visual effects. [fig. 17a,b] Ponti argued that the building's aspiration had, above all, been to express its synthesis and essence and to show where its simplicity, sincerity and truth lay. Furthermore, its pure and finite form expressed its originality which in turn rejected anything that was not made with purpose or had a role. Substance and aim had to indicate from where it originated. The sincerity of the Pirelli was proved by making a historical comparison of the correlation between the outside (the facade) and the interior layout. Ponti illustrated a photograph of an Italian 'palazzo' arguing that one could see the arrangement of the interior, like the diverse functions and purposes of rooms and floors, from the facade. The exterior was thought of as the mirror of the interior. In the context of the 'palazzo' the superimposition of elements not only determined a finite form of 'unità d'habitation', but represented a clear and definite typology, and social hierarchy. The Pirelli building is vertical at the sides, but the glass facade is dominated visually by the horizontal strips of the opaque parapets and yet, the very thickness of the floors had been dispensed with, by making them taper at the edges. "We have managed to preserve a grammatical statement," said Ponti in an article in *Domus* 1961, "by keeping the sections of glass adjoining the pillars transparent, to show that the opaque strips of the parapets had nothing to do with the structure."¹⁰⁹ In Ponti's eyes, however, it proved impossible to get rid of the detested "striped pyjama" effect. The monumental character of the skyscraper, its sign of grandeur, was nevertheless achieved in the imposing entrance leading up to the building. Ponti explained an originality of a project through its 'civiltà'. In this thesis, 'civiltà' cannot be translated into the English word 'civilisation' which is charged with less definite connotations. Ponti's use of the term shifted through the years. He referred to 'civiltà' from the beginning of *Domus* as the starting point for any architecture, that is, to know the history of the man who was going to live in the house. The emphasis changed in 1964. In the article in 1964 'Le Torri del Torino', Ponti referred to it as "the beautiful" and architecture was the expression of that beauty. In another article of his, 'Architettura forma ed espressione di civiltà: il "Pylonen", grattacielo a Stoccolma' in *Domus* n. 414, in the same year, man's 'civiltà' meant to be able to have a selection to choose from, it was freedom. Ponti was interested in forms of architecture of 'today' that did not only represent things by architects, but were an expression of the 'civiltà' that one lived in. He tried to explain;

I would be able to say our epoch, and not our *civiltà*, but I prefer to say *civiltà* because the forms gain values, not only formalistic, but of the imagination, of poetry, of courage and

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¹⁰⁹ Ponti, G. 'Si fa coi pensieri' in *Domus* n. 379, 1961, pp. 1 - 30.



gestione direttiva di questo dato alla agenzia del lavoro, i conflitti minori e non strettamente di agenzia per antichità del lavoro (conflitti sociali). Nel palazzo Pirelli lo spazio è stato realizzato con grande leggerezza per far lo spazio e il potere (spazio per ogni, e perché tutto tutto la più comune movimento umano per la agenzia del lavoro, ma anche anche tutto la gerarchia di controllo di di ogni (spazio e controllo, disoccupazione umana, movimento umano per che lavoro).

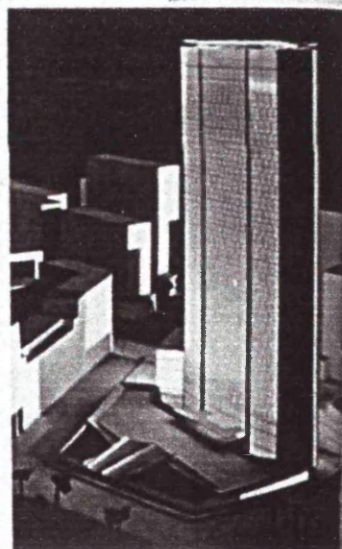
Il lavoro oggi deve trasformarsi da una condizione di pura estrazione-lavoro, in una condizione di sviluppo globale e contemporaneo del suo circolo operativo in atto. Nella sua generalizzazione di lavoro l'uomo è la donna, significa che nel movimento le forze più avanzate ed efficienti stanno di innanzi e di propulsione tecnica e di abilità, ed in più tendono ad ampliare le loro risorse sociali di un'impiego che ha una portata sociale ed spaziale.

La rappresentazione è molto diversa da quella che si ottiene osservando gli effetti del suono quando trasformato nella sua struttura corollatoria: appena si passa dall'aspetto principale a quello del suono che viene differenziato dalla struttura corollatoria, si ha una sensazione di suono ed immaginario in cui non si sente la legge strutturale, ma solo un "suggerimento" di quella che si dovrebbe sentire. In questo caso il suono è "suggerito" da una struttura che non è quella che si sente, ma che si può immaginare. La rappresentazione che si ottiene in questo caso è quella di un suono che si può immaginare, ma che non si sente. La rappresentazione che si ottiene in questo caso è quella di un suono che si può immaginare, ma che non si sente.

questo genere in mezzo al quale ho
la voglia a la parte rappresentativa del
carattere.

[illegible]

*Falsi annunci dell'ultimo (La)
cap. della rivista non è più
più è una semplice cosa e
non è).*



Il terribilissimo scontro tra Giovanni Trapattoni e i suoi all'anno precedente, quando vinse la coppa italiana, non ispirò alla Juventus alcuna esultanza. Il fatto di programmare, infatti, di avere a quella occasione l'allenatore della loro squadra, era una garanzia dell'efficienza, l'esperienza, la classe del loro allenatore. Trapattoni, l'anno scorso, aveva vinto la coppa italiana, e la sua squadra aveva ottenuto la vittoria dopo 17 anni! Il suo stesso successo era già stato annoverato da Giovanni Trapattoni tra i suoi successi. E, infatti, la Juventus di quest'anno è stata la prima.

Fig. 17a.-'Espressione dell'edificio' Domus n. 316 (1956).
A sense of lightness and transparency was demonstrated in the illustrations for the Domus tower by means of lighting and the fine lines which delineated the window frames.

Fig. 17b.- 'Espressione dell'edificio' Domus n. 316 (1956).

from knowledge of technology which are specific to our *civiltà*.
The technology secretly creates the forms and we discover
them: we are not the creators of forms when we discover
forms.¹¹⁰ [Ponti's italics]

The architect was not the inventor of forms or technology but gave them the poetic meaning that raised the level of civilisation and created a monument. The skyscraper illustrated this process well. According to Ponti, it was obviously a monument as a result of its dimensions.¹¹¹ It came to life through an inspiration, from imagination, or rather, from the creativity that was inherent in architecture. It had to be a monument of a formal, skilful synthesis, to have the wish to create an environment that confined itself between the urban landscape (the city of stone made by men) and the natural landscape (the city of God). Ponti continued and firmly believed that now, in 1964, was the greatest and most favourable time in the history of humanity for architecture. Exceptional technology was available that gave new possibilities and enabled architects to use any extraordinary material, independent of its location or, whether it was man-made. To build was a problem of clarity, of a modern vision which came back to the concept of '*civiltà*'. Morally one had to fight against backwardness which had been a cause for historical and social immorality. Architecture should re-connect itself with '*civiltà*' - a concept that incorporated all human aspects; the arts, science, culture, honesty, sociality and strength. Only by applying this '*civiltà*' could contemporary masters create works that expressed a "vision of today as intense as the time of tomorrow". Bearing that in mind, Ponti reminded the reader of the role of his magazine to promote good taste and the significance of having an ambition for achieving beauty inside and outside the home in the city;

Domus is a magazine of habitation, but the habitation, the house, is architecture; and the house has windows, which one can look out from to the spectacle, outside. The same house has its own exterior, and this exterior creates part of the dignity of the habitation.

Urban planning must create this dignity, or rather, a beautiful spectacle to look at out from the house. This urban panorama of the exterior of the house has the same value as the habitation.

These important urbanistic views must be created for everybody: it is a matter of '*civiltà*'.¹¹²

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¹¹⁰ Ponti, G. 'Su Felix Candela' in *Domus* n. 410, 1964, p. 9.

¹¹¹ Ponti, G. 'Le Torri del Torino' in *Domus* n. 411, 1964, pp. 7-9.

¹¹² Ponti, G. 'Le Torri di Torino' *ibid.* pp. 1-10 inclusive. (This is an adjacent column to the main text on page 1)

The panoramic view of the city was depicted from the top floors of a skyscraper or high building - to marvel at the city, as a built artefact, rather than to be able to reflect on the life that went on inside the city. In that way, the viewer was detached from the city itself. The French sociologist Michel de Certeau made a similar point in his book published in the 1980's, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, where he devoted a chapter on 'Walking in the city'. De Certeau questioned whether the city could be seen as anything more than "a representation, an optical artefact" looked down on from the skyscraper:

The panorama-city is a "theoretical" (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices.¹¹³

The city became a sanitised artefact that was further represented in *Domus* as a work of art, deprived of "the presentation of everyday life". The trace of man was only perceptible in the fact that the city, down to its smallest element, remembering Ernesto Rogers's expression in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* 1946 "from the spoon to the city", was an artefact. Reaching the ground level of the city, *Domus* depicted the exterior of a house in isolation, in the same way as its interior was portrayed without its inhabitants. Being confined to the photographic image, *Domus* selected the hypothesised walk of the reader around the city which restricted the ensemble of possibilities of free movements, of drifting away, or improvising walking, transforming or abandoning spatial elements. To use de Certeau quoting from Roland Barthes, it was the magazine itself, which in this context was the user that made the selection, "the user of a city picks out certain fragments of the statement in order to actualise them in secret."¹¹⁴ *Domus* interpreted its selection of buildings representing the 'civiltà' of the city which became articulated as the interior of the city; just as the interior of a building expressed the taste of the inhabitant so the interior of a city expressed the level of civilisation. The standard of the house created the standard of the city, its civilisation - how man lived and his values. It was the interior which made the city special and by offering a diverse selection from within the city, the reader was encouraged to make his own way around the city and to discover its beauty.

In the above mentioned article on Turin's skyscrapers, Ponti quoted the American historian Lewis Mumford where he argued that architecture was not only built to live in, it was also made for "the entertainment of the eyes", and Ponti added, it was also made to be looked at.¹¹⁵ One must create the beauty, 'civiltà', of the city and not just to make a full, or an overcharged, building.

¹¹³ Certeau, M. de (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press. Berkeley Los Angeles London. See especially, Part III Spatial Practices, section VII. 'Walking in the City' pp. 91 - 110. The above quotation is from page 93.

¹¹⁴ Quoted from de Certeau, M. (1984) *ibid.*, p. 98.

¹¹⁵ Ponti, G. 'Le Torri di Torino' in *Domus* n. 411, 1964. p. 7. Ponti makes no reference to where he quoted Mumford from.

Reinforcing this aesthetic experience of the viewer, the architect, the author of the building must be conscious of its effect. Ponti argued in 1964 that the skyscraper must - apart from being conceived as a monument - be out of scale, imperialistic, isolated and an expression of the author.¹¹⁶ The client had to understand the great possibilities that a building entailed as he wrote in 1961,

... I grant, and am pleased, that architecture (good architecture) should be a means of advertising, and I recommend it to all ... when I happen to meet people who are ambitious to live on in History I never fail to advise them to invest in the 'Bank of Architecture' which will assure them of a 'security', which is their name, of unfailing quotation, and I quote the benefits obtained by Popes, Kings, Princes and Patricians who 'loved architecture' and whose names ... have remained ... in the splendour of History...¹¹⁷

In the *Architectural Review*, during the year 1959, the Pirelli tower was heralded as "one most important building in Europe" and, significantly, it was a building "in a controversial theoretical context." Gio Ponti had sent the *Architectural Review* a picture showing the tower near its completion with a covering letter pointing out that not all Italian architects had retreated from the path of Modern Architecture. The magazine praised the use of innovative solutions for the tower that brought forward its modernity and uniqueness:

Since [the tower] is based on a close study of office planning modules, and a drastic re-appraisal of reinforced concrete tower structure, it may well take its place beside such other radical concepts of office-building design as Hentrick's Mannesmann Tower in Dusseldorf, making a decisive and progressive break with a tradition of rectangular glazed envelopes that may well suit the technological and economic conditions of America, but could prove to be a wishful dream in Europe, where economics, technology and the wage-structure of the building industry are so different.¹¹⁸

With regard to the particular Milanese setting, the reader was encouraged to compare the Pirelli tower, "which will take its place as an objective fact in the disputed territory of the Milanese skyline", with the one by BBPR

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¹¹⁶ Ponti, G. 'Architettura forma ed espressione di civiltà: il "Pylonen", grattacielo a Stoccolma' Sune Lindström, arch., e Associati in *Domus* n. 414, 1964, pp. 1-2.

For further references Ponti listed the "skyscraper-monuments" that the magazine had published: by Hentrich and Petschnigg in Düsseldorf (*Domus* n. 372); by Zehrfuss for Paris (*Domus* n. 391); by Castiglioni for the Peugeot competition (*Domus* n. 394); by Ponti Fornaroli Rosselli, Valtoline Dell'Orto for Pirelli, Milan (*Domus* n. 379).

¹¹⁷ Ponti, G. 'Si fa coi pensieri' in *Domus* n. 379, 1961, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ Anonymous and without a title. *Architectural Review* vol. 126, n. 750, July 1959, p. 4.

... which makes a deliberate gesture on behalf of the historical tradition, and assessed in fact, what has only been a matter of conjecture so far - whether a tall tower block, having broken with the traditional scale of the buildings around it, still owes any stylistic consideration to earlier towers, such as those of the Cathedral, that had invaded the skyline before it.¹¹⁹

The skyscraper must reject uniformity, otherwise it would reject the essence of 'civiltà', its own freedom and choice. Ponti made 'Against uniformity', a subject of an article later in 1964, in *Domus* n. 416, (the title was in English and the texts were in Italian, English, French, and German). Here he developed the idea of freedom within architectural practice and town planning and argued that repetition of form and grid structure would destroy the appearance and texture of our cities. So profound were these thoughts that he republished them as a caption to the architecture of Luigi Moretti in *Domus* n. 419, the same year. Simple and pure architecture was considered the monument of 'civiltà'. From the application of 'civiltà', good architecture was born and consequently the city must be born.

Extending the polemics in *Domus* on the skyscraper into that of high-rise living, Alberto Rosselli, reinforced the particular relationship between the skyscraper and the city in an project for a skyscraper.¹²⁰ [fig. 18a,b] The scale of the building was partially a response to its purpose and mirrored its typology. The flats provided different modes of living and dwelling, and allowed for a flexibility for its individuals and families. This was demonstrated not only with the inhabitants differentiating themselves one from the other, but also the need to go beyond oneself and to find an authentic personality. Rosselli explained this by insisting that the monotony of buildings 'today' reflected the monotony of the way of life and the incapacity of looking for the meaning of dwelling in the unusual and unconventional. The office blocks corresponded to the monotony of work that the dwellings had come to copy. Rosselli's skyscraper looked for a new expression of living. It offered people to live up in the sky and to look at the city from a different perspective. This created a new conception of space and orientation. Man's sentiments created new interpretations of the city and in the same way Rosselli tried to create a unique space for living for the modern man. Architecture was turned into an expression of life. In order to reach that aim, the exterior of the building was a primary element - transmitting images full of contrasts in a similar fashion to the images that originated from man's way of life. Its subject was to express the nature of themes that were developed in the interior.

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¹¹⁹Ibid. *Architectural Review*, July 1959, p. 4.

¹²⁰Rosselli, A. 'Una torre per Milano', l'idea di una forma con più orientamenti, e con prospetti variabili secondo l'altezza dal suolo. Alberto Rosselli, nello Studio Ponti Fornaroli Rosselli, strutture: Aldo Favini, ing. in *Domus* n. 416, 1964, pp. 2-10.



piani dal 1° al 17°



piano 18°



piani dal 19° al 22°



piano 23°



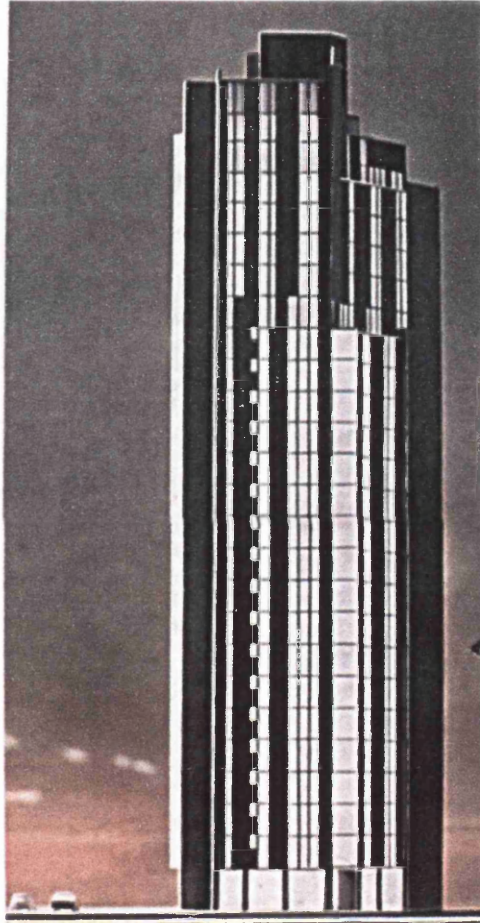
piano 24°



piani dal 25° all'ultimo

Fig. 18a.- 'Una torre per Milano' *Domus* n. 416 (1964).
The building offered multiple angles and a complex visions of the city that was reflected in the lay-out.

per tutto il mondo
Schmidt, Benetton, etc.
nella grande Piazza d'Europa



© 1990, RSC, Roma, Italia

Fig. 18b.- 'Una torre per Milano' *Domus* n. 416 (1964).

1.4.4

Economy and industrial production at the centre of social architecture

Rosselli considered the role of the architect greater than that of a formalist. The architect carried a moral responsibility with society that affected its welfare. He argued that a house participated in the economic welfare of a country, rather than being tied to the arts. Architecture affected the economic and social environment and was part of the big industrial complexes that enabled its construction. Consequently, the architect was at the centre of this situation, not only as a creator of forms, but rather, he was responsible for a true and just development. Every experience of his was a contribution to a complex economic situation and production. This was a fundamental social aspect of architecture. Writing in *Stile Industria* in 1958, Rosselli argued that,

... prefabrication and standardisation of elements for housing ensure a better quality of materials and labour and, at the same time, lower cost. The architect has, thus, the task to intervene in the building process down to the basic technical data and surroundings of these productions and to determine an appropriate development of the ideal and real products.¹²¹

The illustrations that Rosselli used reinforced this idea of extending the element into the production of a city. The main image, which was in colour, showed an interior of the Seagram Building in New York, nearing its completion. [fig. 19] The reader was situated inside an unfinished interior with a view which looked down on a nearby skyscraper and the city. Other smaller images showed studies and models of structures by Conrad Wachsman and R.V. Le Ricolais, a microphotograph of a cut section of a tree from Harvard University, a scholastic exercise of a construction of a modular system made out of paper. The final image led the reader back to the city in an image by Joseph Albers, "City" (1928-1936). Black and white abstract forms of horizontal layers composed a cityscape made of skyscrapers. Instead of looking at the city from the inside, and hence only seeing part of it, Albers's "City" offered a view of a slice section of a metropolis. The part had become a whole offering a diversity in scale and visual play. A visual play was inherent in differentiation. It was essential to provide the possibility in building design of combining parts and units where their composition was not restricted to repeated sizes and shapes. The possibilities that the curtain wall offered was taken up in an article by the architects Costantino Corsini and Giorgio Wiskemann in an inquiry about the Italian aluminium manufacturer Curtisa.¹²² The manufacturer confirmed that there was no rule, standard, or technical

¹²¹ Rosselli, A. 'Le facciate continue: un episodio di disegno industriale nell'architettura' in *Stile Industria* n. 15, 1958, p. 1.

¹²² Corsini, C. & Wiskemann, G. 'Per una nuova espressione architettonica' in *Stile Industria* n. 32, 1961, p. 46.

device that could manipulate the architectural thinking of the curtain wall. The facade should be able to play with the structure, creating different effects corresponding to its structural nature. The 15th issue of *Stile Industria* 1958 had been dedicated to the curtain wall with articles ranging from American and German and Italian experiences, to the relationship with history. The focus had already been set in the front cover designed by Pino Tovaglia. [fig. 20] The composition of the cover was made of standard matches representing a facade of a building. In its simplicity the facade managed to provide a playful image by using two colours; white and green. The structure (the matches themselves with green 'spark' at the end) was white while the windows were represented with green flat surfaces. Presented in such a way, standardised elements encouraged flexibility. One could shift windows from one place to another and create a chiaroscuro effect that played on the surface of the facade. This concern over the effects of a facade was an important issue in debating the Italian city. For Ponti the facade had contributed greatly to the idea of 'civiltà' and urban aesthetics, while for Rogers the interior of the city played a great part in reflecting the traditional and historical values of a particular place. For Rosselli, however, building construction was part of an economic structure. A building was made out of elements rather than being conceptualised as an artistic creation or a moral statement in the city's fabric. Rosselli challenged the traditional role of the architect, the academic that built buildings and thought conceptually about the city. He justified his position in the article, 'Occorre sviluppare una convinzione' in 1961, maintaining that concepts like tradition, the arts, and culture must not intervene in a manner such as to conceal superficiality, lack of skills, or an incapacity to offer adequate solutions to problems of the times.¹²³ Contemporary problems were essentially centred around the mass and only resolved in terms of productivity. Additionally, with regard to the building construction, the broadening of problems entailed going from the specific to the abstract: from the individual to the more complex phenomenon of the community, in speculating and producing for a community of individuals rather than for an individual. Finally, a more advanced quality standard had to be invented - of economy, technology and aesthetics - which reflected real quality, the excellence of production. In order to reach this aim the government, industry and technicians had to engage and unite in their common agenda. Rosselli believed in the social values of these objectives and that they would enable the housing market to offer the public products of better quality and relatively lower prices. The prime aim of building construction was still to provide housing for everybody. Recognising that the reconstruction period during the aftermath of the Second World War and the subsequent building construction belonged to the past, *Stile Industria* made technology a subject of a national and international inquiry in 1960 linking it to the possible crisis in Italian design focusing particularly on the question of whether the juries of the Compasso d'oro Award were judging in a fair manner. This was an award

¹²³ Rosselli, A. 'Occorre sviluppare una convinzione' in *Stile Industria* n. 33, 1961, p. 1.



Le facciate continue:

un episodio di disegno industriale nell'architettura

La ricerca di nuovi habitat per la produzione e la postcoltivazione di alimenti vegetali propaga le tecniche di tutti i paesi della comunità industriale.



Small print text at the bottom of the page.

La ricerca sulla vita di un uomo come lui, il grande e il piccolo, è stata una grande avventura. E' stato un grande lavoro, un grande impegno. E' stato un grande successo. E' stato un grande trionfo. E' stato un grande trionfo.

[illegible][illegible]

Il primo è quello di stabilire se l'attività di un'impresa è di natura industriale o commerciale. In caso di attività industriale, l'impresa è considerata un'attività di natura industriale e, di conseguenza, è soggetta a un'imposta di natura industriale. In caso di attività commerciale, l'impresa è considerata un'attività di natura commerciale e, di conseguenza, è soggetta a un'imposta di natura commerciale.

[illegible]

8. *Capitolo: "L'evoluzione della lingua".* Il capitolo è diviso in tre parti: la prima, la seconda e la terza. La prima parte è dedicata alla storia della lingua, la seconda alla grammatica e la terza alla sintassi. Il capitolo è molto interessante e fornisce molte informazioni sulla lingua italiana.

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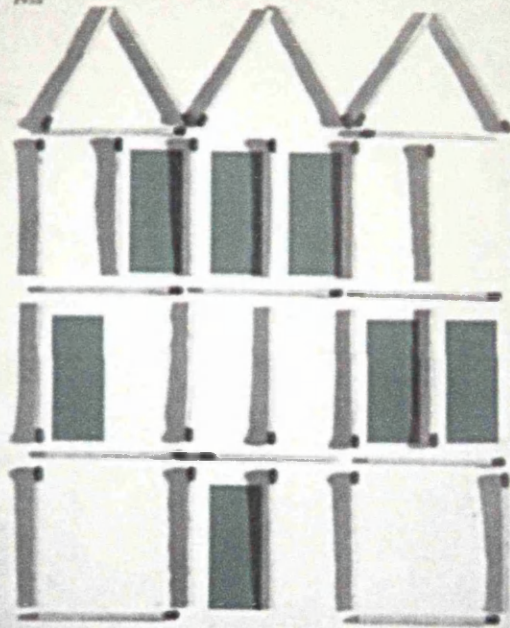


Fig. 19.- 'Le facciate continue: un episodio di disegno industriale nell'architettura Stile Industria n. 15 (1958).
Art and technology create a sense of the infinite by means of the narrow spatial structure in the illustrations of Seagram building and the study by C. Washman.

STILE INDUSTRIA

forma e stile nella produzione

15 1950



disegno industriale industrial design

grafica graphic art

imballaggio packaging

Fig. 20.- Front cover for *Stile Industria* n. 15 (1958).
The universal shapes (triangles, squares and rectangles) invite the architect to re-interpret spatial concepts to meet with local culture.

sponsored by the department store La Rinascente in Milan and in the interest of industrial design. The questions put forward to critics, designers and industrialists were; How is one to consider, in the interests to industrial design in Italy, the unsuccessful awarding of Compasso d'Oro to a designer, critic, an industrial and Italian body? Should such effective measures be held back (mentioned in the jury's report) in order to call attention to the government the problems of industrial design and its teaching? The state of crisis condemned by the jury also coincides with its opinions, or is one to believe that Italian designers have to feel themselves, as such, hit by the judgement expressed in the report by the president and the jury of the prize?¹²⁴ Responding to this inquiry, Bruno Alfieri suggested that the industrial method of building construction should be seen as a possible solution to the problem of the Mezzogiorno (Cassa per il Mezzogiorno was created for economic investment in the South. Founded in 1950, the Christian Democrats offered economic funds to the South, focusing on extensive public-works programme concentrated in the rural areas. In the first ten years of the Cassa, the main areas of intervention were irrigation, land reclamation, road building and the construction of aqueducts and drains).¹²⁵ Alfieri argued that Italy had just experienced its 'boom', full of speculation and of things less 'brutte'. Industrial design in building construction had to be seen as an opportunity, for example, in relation to large scale urban planning, such as the development of the Mezzogiorno. Only courageous planning with good financial backing, as had contained the development of the Mezzogiorno, could revitalise the building industry. Architecture was referred to on an economical, political and social level. This was a response to the fast approaching era of mass-communication and ideological freedom that weakened the commitments to tradition and memory. In a world conference on design in Tokyo in 1960, Rosselli insisted, however, that

... the true problem of communication is to transmit our expressions of design and our symbols in other countries and make them alive. It seems to me, that the most important problem of today is; as the Japanese remain Japanese, the Italians can equally remain Italian. Thinking of a vast culture that must be formed in the future where each one must maintain his basics in the appropriate environment and culture. ¹²⁶

It was clear from the pages of *Casabella continuità*, *Domus* and *Stile Industria* that a shift had occurred in the architectural thinking and city's rhetoric from the time of the reconstruction. Instead of looking at subtleties and peculiarities of a place in the formation of a building, the architect had to

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¹²⁴ See 'Crisi del disegno o crisi del premio?' a cura di Angelo Tito Anselmi in *Stile Industria* n. 26-27, 1960, pp. XI - XXVIII.

¹²⁵ For further reading see; Ginsborg, P. (1990) *A History of Contemporary Italy. Society and politics 1943 - 1988*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex.

¹²⁶ Rosselli, A. 'World design conference 1960' in *Stile Industria* n. 28, 1960, p. xviii.

extend his scope to that of the whole of the city and the region and, consequently, he became part of a team that included sociologists, economists, and specialised technicians.¹²⁷ Sensing this change, the publisher of these three magazines, Gianni Mazzocchi, wrote in the first issue of *Casabella* in 1965 after Rogers had ceased to be editor, that "today side by side, architecture and urbanism triumphed. Now the city weighs more than the building and tomorrow the urbanised region becomes even more important." "Of course", Mazzocchi continued, "one could always look back with nostalgia to the just fight that Giuseppe Pagano and Eduardo Persico had provoked in the pages of *Casabella*, but time flies fast. Regrets and laments are not able to cease it."¹²⁸ *Casabella* with its new subtitle, 'architettura e urbanistica' met the future with a new programme and new energy. It started another life like the city that started a new epoch and which continued to be reflected upon and questioned in the magazines and in the minds of their writers.

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¹²⁷ For further reading see 'Quindici anni di architettura in *Casabella* continuità n. 251, 1961, Tafuri, M. (1990) *History of Italian Architecture, 1944 - 1985*, and Gregotti, V. (1968) *New Directions in Italian Architecture*.

¹²⁸ Mazzocchi, G. 'no title' in *Casabella, rivista di architettura e urbanistica* n. 296, 1965. Direzione G. A. Bernasconi.

Part 2

**The home is the site where humanity and identity of
the individual are fostered**

2.1

'La casa dell'uomo'

In this part which focuses on *Domus*, two rival versions of the 'home' will be distinguished. Ernesto Rogers's interest advocated in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* lay in identifying the humanity of the individual. The Italian architect was 'un architetto militante' in conceiving design, materialising it and holding a discourse about the 'object' inside home. Indeed, within the design discourse, theory and practice were part of the same thing, something which had been inherited from the design debate during the inter-war period. Design was an intellectual discipline with a particular purpose in mind; to unify the different classes and expressions in society, and to meet with the functional needs and political commitment of the time. The home was a place where the architectural language and the culture of the individual were juxtaposed in order to intensify the 'human' aspect of the home and to recognise each element within the consciousness and conscientiousness of the individual. When Ponti took over the magazine, he redirected its rhetoric more in line with establishing the identity of the individuals. The design products were aimed at the middle class consumption and so was *Domus* in promoting the 'good life' of the middle class, the class that had always been criticised and under-estimated, although without it, western civilisation would never have existed.¹ *Domus's* deliberate aim was therefore to affect the choice of the consumer and educate his taste. The question of taste became itself a social issue.

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¹ Castiglioni, L. M. (a cura di) (1994) *Gianni Mazzocchi Editore*, Editoriale Domus, p 34.

2.1.1

The house built up of objects that evoke memories and thoughts

The Second World War left millions of Italians without a roof over their heads and in need of a home. A graph that appeared in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 212 (1946), presented figures in respect to each other and the whole country about the Italian population who had had their rooms destroyed or were uninhabitable.² [fig. 21] The Italian people needed a home that was not only a sanctuary for the family, an ideal setting for comfort, or a mere refuge to sleep. There was a sense of optimism that bridged the past with the future, emerging from concepts of democracy and freedom that were bound to the ideal/real home which architects were determined to strive for. In June 1946, Italy established a democratic state which made architects rethink the notion of dwelling and ask questions such as: Where was a role model to learn from? To what extent should architects retain their own past, and to what extent should they forget? A new society was being built up, with the antagonism between old values and new ideals. Did it perhaps not serve a purpose to look back? Was hope only bound up with the future? These were several approaches that architects could appropriate when thinking about the house and its relationship with the citizen and the city. With Ernesto Rogers taking up the position of editor of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* from 1946 to 1947, the magazine chose to attempt to reshape and reconstruct society by looking for a method to come closer to the subjectivity of the citizen. This subjectivity was not restricted to the concepts of taste, 'object', or the house, but placed man in a larger cultural context that itself belonged to a particular environment. In the first issue Rogers felt obliged to explain the purpose for a magazine when there was such a need for building new housing. It was clear to him that the house was not only a shelter but a cultural identity that had to be defined according to the inhabitant. As a result, a magazine such as *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*, served to define the concept of a dwelling and to give it a theoretical context that related it to its surroundings and that would again be translated into the built environment. He wrote:

We should be running to lend a hand with bricks, rafters or a sheet of glass; instead, here we are with a magazine. We do not give bread to the hungry, or a raft to a drowning man; we prefer to offer them words. Anyone who travels through Italy, along the Aurelia or the Via Emilia, in the Puglie region or in Sicily, will find everything in ruins.

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² Torricelli, Ugo, 'Italia, case distrutte' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 212, 1946, p. 30.

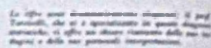
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2



Prof. Ugo Turchetti



Nella tabella 1 si è considerato il numero dei lavori cinematografici distribuiti in rapporto con l'andamento del totale dei voti parlamentari. Si può osservare che la tendenza è di base al calcolo di essere peggiorata, come dato da dati differenti, da quelli cinematografici (che si possono considerare totalmente inattendibili a dal 30% dei danneggiati).

Per il calcolo della media aritmetica dei danneggiati a per i congressi di cinematografici si è tenuto conto anche la metà del numero dei lavori cinematografici nel 30%; dei danneggiati, perché cinematografici non cinematografici espressi in media a rappresentare ancora una distribuzione a due fasi di voto cinematografico.

La media aritmetica dei congressi nel 1940 in Italia, i congressi sono 1.510.000, i cinematografici 1.620.000, i danneggiati 1.100.000.

La tabella 2 considera il numero delle persone senza stanza per distruzione di guerra, la cui età è considerata al numero dei vari beneficiari (studenti, già ammessi, più il 10% dei disoccupati) e lo si è messo in rapporto all'effettivo numero abitativo della zona prima del numero di persone che abitavano in quella zona prima dei bombardamenti.

In Italia oggi ci sono 53.173.000 abitanti, 3.300.000 persone (circa l'11%) hanno avuto distrutta o resa inutilizzabile l'alloggiatura.

Fig. 21.- 'Italia, case distrutte' *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 212 (1946).
The magazine showed figures of the actual destruction of the human dwelling and thus situated the reader within the context of its efforts in building up the 'house of man'.

Rogers believed that in order to build, both the architect and the inhabitant had to know from what premises they built upon, that is, the human aspect of man:

A house is no house if it is not warm in winter, cool in summer, serene in every season, receiving the family in harmonious spaces. A house is no house if it does not contain a corner for reading poetry, an alcove, a bathtub, a kitchen. This is the house of man. And a man is no man if he does not possess such a house. Does this house exist? Did it ever exist?

...

I want to have a house that may look like me (in better aspects): a house that may look like my humanity.

The house is a problem of limits (like, for that matter, almost every other problem of existence). But the definition of these limits is a problem of culture, and this is precisely what the house is in the end (like the other problems of existence). If this is the case, words are also a building material. And a magazine may be an instrument, or sieve, serving to provide a stable criterion for choice.³

The house was the mirror of man's sentiments and way of life. Limits, or boundaries, were not to be understood as that at which something stopped. They were equally that at which something began. In other words, the results of creative participation constituted man's existential foothold, his culture. As in the world of art, the house was not a collection of objects without a context. The philosopher and history university lecturer (of Enzo Paci and Ernesto Rogers), Antonio Banfi argued in his book, *Vita dell'Arte* (1947), that the world of art was not a collection of works from a museum, fragments from a concert, excerpts from an anthology for the public to enjoy. Art was the living reality where the aesthetic problem in conjunction with life itself made tension, asserted itself, developed, differentiated, dissolved, multiplied across various aspects within experience and was always taking on new forms. Every work of art was alive in the reality in which the aesthetic problem was individualised and it was absolutely resolved in a single equilibrium. This meant that it had a decisive relativity. Firstly, it was a work of its time, of its environment, from its tradition and culture. But, secondly, it had a universal and an eternal value, like an attained and fixed direction of an actual aesthetic transfiguration, through its liberation and its ability to reshape our common way of seeing the world.⁴ In this way art expressed contextual circumstances and embodied an ideal vision of the world, it celebrated man's true existence.

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³ Rogers, E.N. 'Programma: Domus, la casa dell'uomo' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 205, 1946, p. 3.

⁴ Banfi, A. (1947) 'Motivi dell'estetica contemporanea' in *Vita dell'arte*. Alessandro Minuziano editore, Milano, p. 115.

Interpreted within similar vocabulary, what the house contained and what happened in it, was subject to a complex overlapping of experiences, diverse minds and relationships that only a few were able to grasp and elaborate on. The artist/architect/poet was one who managed to overcome superficial hindrances and illusions and to extract reality in its multiple forms. In the sphere of the home, the architect encouraged the inhabitant to express his reality with integrity, his own psyche that reflected his conscience and finally, the way in which he dwelt. The house became a complex sphere of social realism. Explained by Renato Guttoso writing about the roots for his art in the last issue of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* (1947) edited by Rogers, he argued that every epoch had its own realism. Every way of thinking, every type of social relationship and all the complex factors that characterise an epoch, were the reality of that epoch. Every artist had his own style (invented new forms), but every epoch had its own reality and those who discovered that reality were the ones who, on the one hand, were capable of making it continue and, on the other, build up stylistic elaboration.⁵ Thus Guttoso's internal freedom, which he felt as a coherent modern artist and a man of faith, could justifiably have had a parallel development in his creativity and in the society that he engaged in.

Turning to a more poetical rhetoric, it was a matter of 'feeling' the environment, its culture and peculiarity, that became reinterpreted and visualised within the boundaries of the home. The 'home' was from where man originated and his history became felt when 'breathing' the house. This was brought forward in an article on Kafka's interiors 'Le rêve architecte (les intérieurs de Kafka)' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 218 (1947) where, in the universe he described, the architectonic elements of doors, facades and windows appeared as invisible powers. They were located so as to separate, they established 'here' and 'there'. These obstacles tried to explain a world that one could not enter or escape from. Kafka's universe was structural but consisted of situations. There was no metamorphosis. The 'strangeness' lay in the positions of characters against objects, i.e. a bed that a stranger had to jump over to enter a room, or a ceiling that forced one to bend the neck in the room. These facts established the 'absurd'. There was a lack of co-ordination that made everything become 'abnormal'.⁶ One was never able to pass through the definite barrier. As one entered the many doors and corridors in a house their power was destroyed, the imagination was no longer at play. Similar thoughts had been articulated in the article 'La grande casa di Proust' on Marcel Proust's book *Remembrance of Things Past* in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 210 (1946). In his book the primary act of experiencing the environment and absorbing those thoughts in one's memory created a play of

⁵ Guttoso, R. 'Lettera di Guttoso' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 223/224/225, 1947, pp. 52-56.

⁶ Starobinski, J. 'Le rêve architecte (les intérieurs de Kafka)' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 218, 1947.

recognition. Only by experiencing, one could remember things past, as Proust wrote "reality takes shape in the memory alone."⁷ Corporeal and incorporeal substances evoked man's memory as man took notice of his environment. Proust's lyrical poetry described to the reader how the protagonist sensed his walk;

... suddenly a roof, a gleam of sunlight on a stone, the smell of a path would make me stop still, to enjoy the special pleasure that each of them gave me, and also because they appeared to be concealing, beyond what my eyes could see, something which they invited me to come and take but which despite all my effort I never managed to discover. Since I felt that this something was to be found in them, I would stand there motionless, looking, breathing, endeavouring to penetrate with my mind beyond the thing seen or smelt. And if I then had to hasten after my grandfather, to continue my walk, I would try to recapture them by closing my eyes; I would concentrate on recalling exactly the line of the roof, the colour of the stone, which, without me being able to understand why, had seemed to be to be bursting, ready to open, to yield up to me the secret treasure of which they were themselves no more than the lids.⁸

The reconstruction of memory lay in the sensitive relationship between the subject and object, in impressions that were examined closely, brought to light, and hence, transformed the intellectual conception of creativity. Rogers was receptive to this way of thinking and argued that creativity was influenced by the dialectical relationship between two opposite aspects of memory. That is, the relationship between conscious and subconscious 'nutrition', already consumed by experience, created the new. In the new lay the ghost of ancestral memories, of preservation and reflection. An elaboration of already existing things continued to exist within us and established a tradition. The nature of memory consisted in granting temporal measurement to spatial things, to all periods of the past embodied in things. But that aggregation of past times reappeared as if they were real and reunited into one force in order to give advice to those that were alive. To admonish and remember had the same etymological roots and from there the word, monument, acquired the value and symbolism that it contained. A monument was not only the house of God or a prince, but above all the house of man and indeed any built organism which synthesised utility and beauty in order to reach the making of a human society. Here was another working of memory, not that which moved from us towards things, but the things coming to us and beyond us. An artist was not

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⁷ Proust M. (1982) *Remembrance of Things Past*, Volume 1, Swann's Way, Within a Bidding Grove. Vintage Books, New York, p. 201. Proust's continuous novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* was originally published in eight parts from 1913 to 1927.

⁸ Proust M. (1982) *ibid.* p. 195

an artist as such if he was not sensitive to the memory based on the experience of others, and identified with the two significant elaborations of contemplation and activity.⁹ When reviewing Proust's *Remembrance of things past* in 'La grande casa di Proust', Giasiro Ferrata described how Proust managed to create personages who had filtered through an immense *livre d'heures*, and at the same time whose winding existence had been gathered through events.¹⁰ This discourse of consciousness was never an atmosphere nor a shining of light onto objects, it was a structure inseparable from the objects' reality. What was visually most important was to get away from the absolute sentiment, to liberate oneself from any external imposition from space and time. "Squeezing through the memory of a house" became identical to the function of the "drama of undressing". [fig. 22] Taken a step further, to recall the one who really lived in the house, from the architecture to the privacy of the home, one had also to remember the work of the architect. This was because his stones, concrete and windows formed an organism that contained all the secret acts of the person who lived in that house. In that way, the house became and remained a true dwelling-place. A house was not simply associated with materials and neither was it a dwelling-place merely associated with the surroundings. In so arguing, Ferrata cited Valéry where the latter compared the house with a tree. Both the house and the tree were with their roots, trunks, and branches and which grew out of one unique life. With the image of the tree in mind, the concept of 'the house of man' was brought back. Measured on the same basis of real existence, it was the energy that gave nutrition from the ground to the top and it was the work of the conscience which provided this infinite energy in all its expressions. The images from the house at Combray contained this kind of moral sentiment - pain, rebellion, and affection - which proliferated throughout Proust's entire memory. Every one made his own peace with his conscience, and from that peace of conscience he reflected on the domestic intensity, and recaptured the essence of man's dwelling-place. Feelings were made tangible. The reader, who recaptured the experience of being in one of the rooms described by Proust, sensed its fragile and transparent coolness against the afternoon sun behind the half-closed shutters. A reflection of light still found a way to show its yellow rays, motionless between the wood and the glass and in an angle like a resting waterfall.¹¹ To relive a dwelling was to relive its poetry and the essence of time that was measured against the inhabitant. The architect, seen through the pages of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*, tried to build the 'house of man' within this context of cultural sentiment. Given the new sense of

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⁹ Rogers, E. N. (1961) *Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico*. Editori Laterza, Bari, p. 81 - 82.

¹⁰ Ferrata, G. 'La grande casa di Proust' in *Domus la casa dell'uomo* n. 210, 1946, pp. 13 - 16. Proust's book *Remembrance of Things Past* was later translated into Italian as *Il tempo ritrovato*, in 1952, Torino.

¹¹ Proust, M. *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Cited from Ferrata, G. 'La grande casa di Proust' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 210, 1946, p. 13.

Fig. 22.- 'La Grande casa di Proust' *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 210 (1946).
Entering the rooms as if looking through a peep-hole, the reader of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* is invited visually to enter the space where the writer wrote most of *Remembrance of Things Past* and to his bedroom where he died. Thus the reader's imagination uncovers secrets of Proust's existence which do not enter his novels.

freedom and democracy, the ideal house for the individual was assessed according to his character and experiences, a measurement of popular culture.

2.1.2

Recollecting the past in the present subjectivity

In the pages of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*, during 1946 and 1947, a number of articles appeared about how to arrange the often small amount of furniture that people possessed, with newly designed furniture which at the same time had to be within their economic reach. Architects who appeared in the magazine considered it morally impossible to offer people a reality that was unfamiliar to them. It was inconceivable, in other words, to propose an environment that was out of context to people. In its first issue in 1946, *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* published a series of proposed flats for various fictitious clients, under the title, 'Pronto soccorso'.¹² An example of its rhetoric was a project by an architect named Latis for a young engineer, or chemist, with a wife and two children aged twelve and nine years. They had acquired their house around fifteen years ago when just married and throughout these years they had developed their own particular taste. [fig. 23] The architectural problem was manifold because, as with all of the flats' proposals, there were certain elements to consider that involved the basic facts concerning the family size, what kind of house the architect was dealing with, number of rooms, the type of existing furniture that survived the war, and finally, to keep maximum contact with reality. One of the first problems facing the architect when re-building a house, was to respond to the way in which life had evolved. Consequently a need emerged to update the house and to provide the dwelling with a unity and coherence that it had been lacking. It was perceived unthinkable to reconstruct an environment which consisted solely of the desperately few things from the previous dwelling. Significantly, in addition to being useful, these things had an emotional value that the family of the engineer refused to part with. In thinking of the project, memories about this furniture, aged but not old, served to help reliving the new interior design. It had to be clear from the outset that none of the furniture evoked a feeling of being an antique, nor provoked a play of contrasting irony. Remembering the importance Proust placed on sentiments, it was in these architectural proposals that they were given a full value. The things that evoked memory determined the level of humanity in the house of man, his thoughts and feelings. The challenge of this project was how to become familiar to new conditions and cultural climate and yet to warn against recreating an environment already obsolete, or non-existent. Working within that framework, the new and the old furniture were indistinguishable at first glance when looking at the sketches. Observing more attentively one

¹²'Pronto soccorso: 5 proposte di 5 architetti' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 205, 1946, p. 12.

discovered the diversity, the opposite styles and tendencies that created a personal atmosphere. This was precisely what gave value to the dwelling. At the end of the day, dwellings were neither a museum nor a shop window. The rearrangement of furniture focused on bringing out the cultural side of the inhabitant by placing books, for instance, prominently in the living room. It tried to distract attention from furniture of 'bad' taste (i.e. the 'toilette' in the bedroom) and to place a painting (already in the clients' possession) as the central focus for the bedroom.

A beautiful house was seen as one that fulfilled its function. But a human house was that with something else in addition. Something which finally was confined to contrasting the play of light and shadows which gained a material substance, and big and small spaces which expressed more or less calmness or optimism; this made it a true architecture. As Rogers was to say in an editorial 'Casa reale e casa ideale',

... real home and ideal home: in the programme of reconstruction, the two must be parts of the same problem; just because we are poor we must not waste even a single brick and the little we achieve must help the ideal to become reality.¹³

In so doing, a complete conception of design of architecture did not exist, only the method; a method to investigate reality. However solid it appeared, translated into a poetic and artistic interpretation of human needs, architecture in the pages of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* was a process which demanded a coming together of different forces all equally important and subjective to human conditions. In this way, the definition of a house became a symbol for architecture. Each house was a representation of one's shelter for the consciousness and in which the identity of one's domestic space was reflected and the essence of man's dwelling place was recaptured. The reality of one's life was embedded in lived experiences, those which the architect interpreted and for which he created a unity of space.

2.1.3

Technology symbolises freedom and flexibility

Offering another dimension to the architectural debate the architect, Luigi Fratinò argued, in the article 'Unità e variabilità della casa' (1946), that this adhesion between house and man's life confirmed that the degree of variation within the house could be considered as a new problem. [fig. 24a,b] The house had always been felt as an equilibrium between equal parts and more complex or indeterminate ones; that is, constants and variants. This

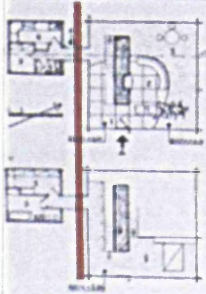
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¹³ Rogers, E.N. 'Casa reale e casa ideale' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 209, 1946, p. 2.

Fig. 23.- 'Pronto soccorso: 5 proposte di 5 architetti' *Domus*, la casa dell'uomo n. 205 (1946).
A plan of the flat was provided as well as samples of the owners' furniture - all divorced of their physical context. This was a suggestive gesture that the reader was expected to participate in the re-construction, to re-connect the furniture with the lived-in-space, and man with his dwelling.

qualità tecniche che nelle condizioni un mondo progressivo del tutto, sono l'unico vero, a un senso sicuro, per conquistare il nuovo equilibrio, la nuova casa dell'uomo, perché l'uomo d'oggi vuole più che mai a beneficiare, a stabilizzarsi con che ha la casa con gli altri uomini (anche al di là delle possibilità materiali) e ciò che ha di veramente umano (al di là delle diverse possibilità economiche), così nella sua abitazione sarà oltre ogni altra la distinzione tra una parte strettamente necessaria da casa a casa e una parte uguale, liberata per meditazione e creatività. La nuova tecnica abitativa non corrisponderà pertanto solo a due le tecniche e, appunto, l'una sviluppando l'abitazione e

I due progetti della casa: quello in alto corrisponde alle parti variabili interne, quello in basso alle parti costanti. Il primo con le pareti flessibili (doppia lancetta oscillante), le numerose finestre (a elementi angolari) e le porte a tirante, stabilisce una continuità con lo spazio esterno e la natura. Il secondo determina invece una netta separazione con le pareti fisse e prevalentemente chiuse: in questa parte anche l'aria e la temperatura saranno costanti, condizionata.



Disegno casa ideale pensata da Perennati nel '62 e il primo esempio di casa reale e costruita. Situata nella zona delle due parti, questa è a sinistra. A destra è il blocco "modello" (zona comune, B. C., l'ingresso, sopra l'acqua e guardando), a destra quella "vera" (zona privata e soggiorno, sopra letto e studio).

di G. G. G. G.

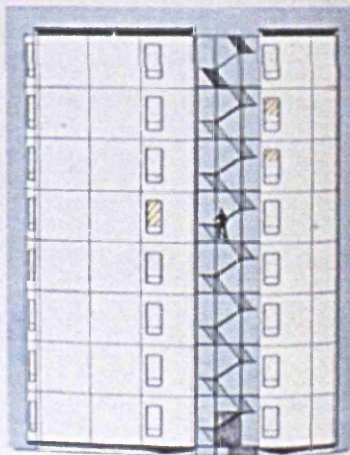
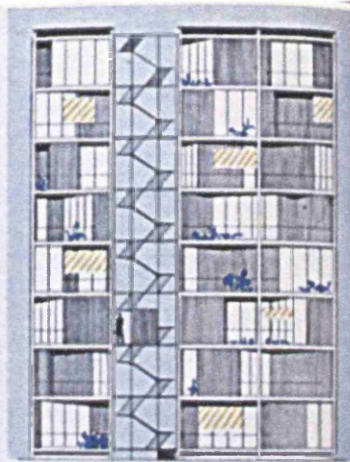


Fig. 24a. 'Unità e variabilità della casa' *Domus*, la casa dell'uomo n. 214 (1946).
Establishing a unit system offered the possibility of breaking the units down to provide a space which was open to change depending on people's needs.

[illegible]

diversi esempi di sistemazione della parte variabile delle cose: qui si vedevano sempre unite come coltate la parte comune («: ha: giallo»), che si apre nelle grana sul posto del granaio. La variabile delle frasi («: l'antico, vecchio, ripete all'apoteosi, immortale, pure, ecc. / partorisce una nuova variabile architettonica nei rapporti tra parti che si aprono,

già della sua deliziosa cucina: nella prima e quella nella seconda categoria, è certo che questa è la vera cucina italiana.

Il libro approfondisce variamente l'argomento, da applicazioni a qualsiasi tipo di caso, come a distinguere le apparecchiature da tutto il resto dell'edilizia. Il libro è diviso dalla una di Presentazione comprende oltre alle apparecchiature, guardando, significativamente, ecc.

Comunque, questa è la differenza che si trova a distinguere le due destinazioni della politica: la prima è la politica di governo, la seconda è la politica di sviluppo. La politica di governo è la politica che si occupa di regolare la vita della comunità, la politica di sviluppo è la politica che si occupa di creare le condizioni per lo sviluppo della comunità.

Per le seconde e terze, il contrabbasso, invece, viene indicato, con alcune aggiunte, in modo da poter essere anche un organo, anche un basso. In fondo è possibile diventare questo, facendo dello strumento il che si dice del corpo, che non è mai stato così: nessuno del resto sfuggirà mai, perché facile riconoscerlo con le funzioni in comune della famiglia di contrabbassisti a quella individuale dei suoi contrabbassi.

Questo progetto vuol essere un'immagine del
le altre campagne e, dato l'ordine di quan-
tita, non è certo il progetto di una casa, quan-
to di un sistema di spazi, molto condizionato
quindi dalle sue caratteristiche urbanistiche.

Altri particolari sono per esempio le forme delle lettere, tanto con le asce di cui sono composte, quanto con le ascendenze, le discese e le xifone, nel quoziente i principi delle lettere della cosa, che cioè gruppate proprio in lettere l'applicazione degli archetipi fanno tali, marcati, ed una forma anche forte. E che il segno stesso, nonostante la sua ragione, come quella delle lettere, cioè, dove le curve, le punte, delle ascendenze, delle discese,

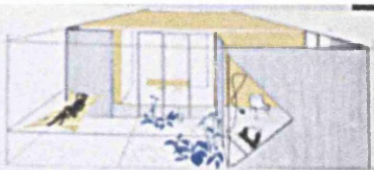


Fig. 24b.- 'Unità e variabilità della casa' *Domus*, la casa dell'uomo n. 214 (1946).

equilibrium had, however, been broken in 'our' times, Fratino continued, and still remained undefined and unresolved. The only method in order to achieve a new equilibrium - for the new 'house of man' - was through technological possibilities.¹⁴ As Paolo Chessa and Marco Zanuso had written in the first issue of *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* in 1946, the traditional technology in the building construction industry was no longer sufficient.¹⁵ Different constructive procedures were required from those of the primitive man who had given shape to clay and earthenware. The technical tool for 'present' dimension would be the module which would serve as a reference for all serial production of construction. On the other hand, the building construction would meet with the variations of composition that the module offered. As a tool, they continued, the module was not a contemporary discovery. It already had acquired a traditional and a cultural meaning, which went from Palladio, who used it to design the facade according to aesthetic standards drawn from musical scale and harmony, to the invention of the Meccano which allowed a child to form the aspirations of his fantasies. Similarly, according to Chessa and Zanuso, a modular system provided a vast freedom for the building industry; in terms of aesthetics, construction, and in creating a human environment. What was important was to understand the modular system, and from there prefabrication, as a methodology towards a required aim.

Mechanisation of production was a widely debated issue in architecture and was reflected in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*. An article by Siegfried Giedion, based on a section from his yet unpublished book, *Mechanization Takes Command*, appeared in the magazine n. 216, 1946 as 'L'età della meccanizzazione totale'.¹⁶ He argued that from the period between the two World Wars, full mechanisation had taken place in society, particularly in America. By means of scientific investigations, time had changed for good in the fields of agriculture, transportation - the importance of the car and creation of highways - and in the domestic sphere - in the hygiene of the kitchen and bathroom, ways of cooking where ready-made and canned food was easily available, and produced by an assembly-line system - and by means of radio broadcasting. But although Giedion pointed out that man sensed (with his eyes and ears) mechanically produced food, for example, in a different way from the slowly cooked 'polenta', he did not make a connection between these ideas and where they came from. A change had occurred greatly affecting people's way of life but one was left without a possible explanation of the process. No doubt was raised whether man gained more time to nourish human contacts as

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¹⁴ Unità e variabilità della casa' Arch. Luigi Fratino in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 214, 1946, p. 4.

¹⁵ Chessa, P. A. e Zanuso, M. 'La casa prefabbricata, il modulo' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 205, 1946.

¹⁶ In his book, *Mechanization Takes Command* (1975), this section appeared as 'The Time of Full Mechanization, 1918-39' (pp. 41-45). W.W.Norton & Company, New York - London. Copyright 1948 by Oxford University Press.

a benefit from the invention of the machine which was, in fact, what *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* encouraged. The relationship between the man and machine was reflected in an editorial by Rogers in 1947 after a recent journey to a CIAM congress in England. The members were invited to visit a big factory where prefabricated houses were made as well as huge aeroplanes. He described the situation crudely, insisting that there was a lack of cohesion between human existence and the house, between mind and constructing. Both the aeroplane and houses were made of aluminium. The houses were small, reduced to the bare necessity whilst to Rogers's amazement the hanger was extremely wide. So much so that one of the visitors exclaimed; "In this country I would rather be an aeroplane than a human being!" Rogers explained this kind of statement by tracing the process of producing a house where an assembly-line system was used. He recalled:

... we see first aluminium frames, the moulds where the concrete is cast for holding parts, then stratifications for insulating: they acquire their own particular shapes while carried over, more and more complete, from department to department: here are the skeleton, the flesh, the skin of the house: in the central department the complicated unit kitchen-bathroom, the bowel of the house, is being built. Then the walls are welded, now one room, then another, and above, the roof: a little green round the eaves, the windows, the frontdoor; ivory cream all the rest, and the house is finished. Hoisted up on four wheels and pulled by a tractor, off it goes. It will stop near similar houses among the green meadows of Somerset, or farther off, near the smoky houses of a mining centre in Wales.

They will be part of the landscape, of the planning of life. Here is the problem. All alike? Yes, all alike.¹⁷

The houses were all from the same mould, lacking any cultural expression or individuality. Considered by Rogers, the function of an aeroplane was to make life easier, more comfortable and practical while the house identified itself with human existence. Understood in the cultural context of the time, the twofold task of the modern architect was to guarantee the unique freedom of the individual in his many-sided aspects and to make use of the professional suggestions of the engineer which testified to the making of an aeroplane. In this sense prefabrication and any other progressive technical system were useful corollaries to inventiveness, but only if so understood were they to be desired. The 'house of man' was thus measured against the subjectivity of the inhabitant despite the appearance of the machine in the production line. The architects at *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* did not address their message to a definite class or a social group but rather encouraged the whole of society to

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¹⁷ Rogers, E. N. 'Apologo' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 222, 1947, p. 1.

sense a collective need of unity - to bring it back together regardless of class. In this respect the house was a mirror of that morality making a meeting point for past and present values. The theory that was put into practice by the architects published in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*, was to stress the importance to feel the house, to 'breathe' its space and memory that its objects evoked. The 'house of man' was a lived-in-space where emotions had an equal value to technological innovation.

2.2

A home displays pride and 'civiltà'

2.2.1

Shifts in representing the 'ideal' home

With the expulsion of the Communists (PCI) and Socialists (PSI) from the coalition in May elections 1947, the political climate in the country changed. Prior to the elections, the USA had increased its anti-Communist investment with shiploads of food and fuel, pledges on Trieste, guns and ammunition for the police, even posters and leaflets. The country also received \$2,200 million of aid, cheap loans, etc. between 1943 and 1948 and Marshall Aid contributed another \$1,500 million in the following four years.¹⁸ In addition, an intensification of the impact of American culture on Italy occurred around 1947, which helped to shift the emphasis towards private consumption. The Christian Democrats had both America and the Church behind them. Priests and bishops threatened excommunication for anyone who voted Communist and parish halls became electoral headquarters. The Pope himself, in his Christmas message of 1947, warned that "he who gives his support, his services and talents to those parties and forces that deny God is a deserter and a traitor."¹⁹ The Resistance no longer had the same strength as it had prior to the 1947 election. Left wing intellectuals were forced to retreat from the

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¹⁸ Clark, M. (1995) *Modern Italy 1971 - 1982*, Longman, London and New York. First published in 1984, p. 348.

¹⁹ Clark, M. (1995) Op. cit. p. 324 -325.

spotlight and fight for their ideals in prominent positions from behind the scenes, it was impossible for intellectuals to participate actively in the material and cultural reconstruction of the country. Instead they watched from the sidelines as a chance to establish direct contact with the masses vanished. Confirmed in their historic separation from the country and its ruling powers, Italian intellectuals considered themselves to be a minority that was right in a country that was wrong.²⁰ Rogers was one of the intellectuals whose beliefs went under scrutiny. In his last editorial for *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* entitled 'Saluto' at the end of 1947, Rogers expressed his frustration at having failed to reach more than an elite readership through the pages of an expensive magazine that was still acting primarily as an arbiter of taste. It seemed that the reader was still tied to belonging to a class that appealed to a certain taste and style rather than to become tied to intellectual thoughts about the new home. With Gio Ponti returning to take over the editorship of *Domus* in 1948, he highlighted the notion of the ideal home as a status symbol and introduced a more élitist approach to the question of design, an overtly expressive, middle-class approach. As Penny Sparke argued in her article, 'Italian Industrial Aesthetics and the Influence of American Industrial Design', Ponti changed the ideological emphasis in the editorial content to one that was in line with the American model of private consumption.²¹ The American idea of democracy, built upon the basis of shared materialism, began to filter into the design discussion, bringing influence based on their lifestyle, ideas of freedom and access. The American client was measured against the banners of Popular culture and High culture. The difference between American clientele through commercial pragmatism and the one that Ponti appealed to was highlighted by means of social status. While the stream-line in America was frequently adorned with chrome strips that acted as evocative and seductive highlights emphasising their popular appeal, Italy's home market was pre-dominantly middle class and believed to be more visually sophisticated and understanding of the world of art. Another differentiation lay in the Italians' awareness of history which was very unlike the American setting where speed and mechanisation were primary qualities that served the client. Ponti had already assumed the proposed clientele of the magazine when he chose the title in 1928. He attracted people who were socially privileged and financially capable of having a spacious dwelling, were economically flexible, could travel internationally and collect art objects from different parts of the world, and who consequently gathered their visual experience at home and acquired a certain knowledge about the form. The form, or the physical shape, of the object did not appeal only to the intelligence but to the senses. As Ponti wrote in 'Woman and Architecture',

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²⁰ Branzi, A. 'Italian Design and the Complexity of Modernity' in Celant, G. (ed.) (1994) *Italian Metamorphosis 1943 - 1968*. Guggenheim Museum, New York, p. 600.

²¹ Sparke, P. 'Italian Industrial Aesthetics and the Influence of American Industrial Design' in Celant, G. (ed.) (1994) *ibid.* pp. 608 - 615.

... form has an extra practical and poetic function of its own, that of giving us pleasure in using it, and this functionality originates in its harmony with our senses (pleasure) and not just with our brains (usefulness). It is foolish of us not to consider the senses - those faculties more mysterious than thought, those acute, ductile, true, deep, real, sincere, honest faculties - as a part of intelligence. Without the senses, with intelligence only, we don't understand a thing.²²

Our sensitivity towards the immediate environment sets the standard for our taste, and conversely beautiful forms and art works arouse our senses. This was felt in viewing the furniture and buildings of the Turin architect Carlo Mollino, frequently featured in the magazine from 1948 to 1953.²³ His works created a world of fantasy where the use of the form and material had a sculptural quality of an organic nature. [fig. 25] Mollino was a unique architect in his treatment of form and material but he would be understood by the bourgeois client because of their common artistic heritage. Mollino's furniture would be considered pieces of art that should have a place in the home of the socially well-to-do. Similarly, Lucio Fontana's ceramics, which led to his spatial sculptures, decorated *Domus's* interiors. Diverse as they were, they appealed to the ever growing number of the new industrial bourgeois who wanted to create a standard indicative of their status. At this point therefore, the American notion of private consumption could only have a symbolic meaning for the Italian market of improving standards of living. As suggested by Ponti, the Italian client was significantly different in his approach to the idea of his home. The Italian home was not a collection of obsolete objects but of valuable representative objects of a particular taste, a particular epoch, and a particular history. It was matter of learning to recognise and appreciate the lasting form, that which was functionally durable and visually pleasing. The new and the old were placed side by side, complementing each other rather than projected in a hierarchy of meanings. The market was not yet ripe for the obsolescence of mass consumption. Observed through the pages of *Domus* as it changed hands, the political climate of these years had affected the representation of the home. From building up the home from the client's consciousness, the architect shifted the focus to the education of taste which was then displayed in the home. The individual was seen to belong to a class of the well-to-do and the objects he had around him at home reflected and symbolised his social level, instead of being based on practical exigencies.

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²² Ponti, G. 'Woman and architecture' in *In Praise of Architecture*, (1960) F.W.Dodge Corporation, New York, p. 147. The original, Italian language-edition of this book bearing the title *Amate L'Architettura* was published in 1957 under the copyright of the Società Editrice Vitali e Ghianda of Genoa.

²³ See for example issues n. 227 in 1948 and n. 238 in 1949.

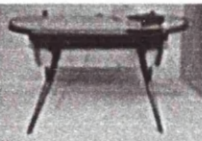
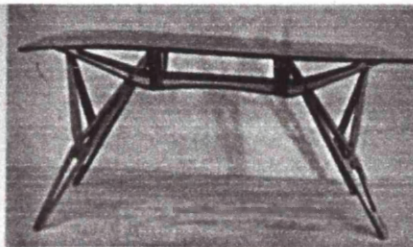
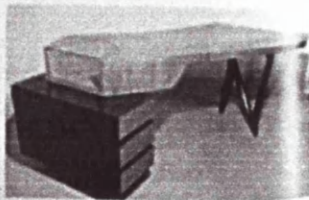
**Forme di mobili**[illegible]

Fig. 25.- 'Forme di mobili' *Domus* n. 227 (1948).
Mollino's furniture were unique pieces similar to works of art. In that way, they represented originality and fantasy of form that would add to 'civiltà' in the 'home'.

2.2.2

'Civiltà' embraces the civic pride of beauty and the arts, 'collezionismo' and fantasy of the house

As an editor of *Domus*, Ponti encouraged a renewal of the language for modern design. Its sources should no longer be based on modern architecture but more on the arts and crafts. In his first editorial in 1948, he stated that the intentions of *Domus* were to document artistic activities concerned with life and the house (the arts, architecture, interior design and crafts) and to present all these activities based on their creative values and significance upon their mechanism and good finish. Arts and crafts production having disappeared in Germany, Ponti believed that Italy, or rather the work of the Italians, found itself facing imminent possibilities at the forefront of the international market, designing utilitarian products of exceptional quality. Ponti thought this was particularly appropriate when talking about industrial production and crafts, and of publishing arts, as well as the pure arts and architecture. It was through their "vocation" (Ponti's inverted commas), which deserved to be presented and active all over the world, that architects, artists, and technicians attempted to raise Italy. Everything which was published in *Domus* should be measured according to its level of work and hence with a critical eye. Measuring the arts on the same basis as labour, the same should apply for poetry. Work was not only weariness and sweat, a reckoning payable to society, a vital problem of production, the mechanism of exchange, nor the symbol of social equality. The work of man was the condition of his fine creative activity and that with which he identified. Work was a wonderful deed. At the end of the editorial, Ponti asked:

If such an intense work is a symbol of our destiny, our 'civiltà', is it not also the most extraordinary and 'artistic' recognition that we can make for Man?²⁴

'Civiltà' was given a great emphasis in the conception of architecture and included a sense of citizenship, civilisation, culture and urban pride for the city. There were a number of particular terms, or conditions, for 'civiltà' that were laid out in an article in the same issue in 1948.²⁵ The article placed Figini's and Pollini's building for Olivetti at the centre of its explanation for the terminology, like a symbol and a song (referring to Le Corbusier who said "architecture sings"). The first two propositions included improvement on social conditions that had to start with improvement of housing. Thirdly, practical solutions should be found for the function of the house by

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²⁴ Ponti G. 'Sul piano del lavoro' in *Domus* n. 226, 1948 p. IX.

²⁵ Sette termini di civiltà' arch.tti Figini e Pollini in *Domus* n. 226, 1948. p. 22.

conducting an accurate and rational study of furniture and their proportions. The fourth element was a consequence of the previous one, namely, an education about the quality of things. 'Civiltà' had created technically perfect objects, using highly developed systems of production and using materials rationally, they had brought about highly competent end products. The machine, as a result of diversified experiences and research, had found the appropriate aesthetic beauty. This was the result of two factors; the scientific and economic study of working methods and, - what became the fifth term for 'civiltà' - the 'civiltà' of aesthetic expression indicative of an equilibrium of artistic composition. The sixth concept involved the cultural language of 'civiltà' - that is, publications, which leads to the last concept of 'civiltà' involving a cultural interest in all that man had created and creates, namely, 'collezionismo'. This was not meant to be an obsession of collecting but a conscious love for things made by the human intellect. It was a civil activity of man aiming to conserve things created, together compiling the true history. Elaborating this idea in the same issue, the architect, Mario Tedeschi, one of the two members of the editorial board at *Domus*, offered some general advice for the house, 'Consigli per la casa', where he reiterated the cultural value of 'collezionismo' for the benefit of the whole life:

... 'collezionismo' is the organisation of culture itself. There are not only the antiques that should be collected, 'collezionismo' should also include objects of today. One should become familiar with the spectacle of the world and to know not to deplore it or to disapprove of it. Everything must be collected; all that which makes man valuable, all the evidences of his costumes and his creation are miraculous. His history, the history of man, about us, is the most extraordinary history conceivable...

The function of the 'collezionistica' is the most civil one. Do not throw away anything that one possesses, neither magazines nor objects, or books. Instead, gather them, conserve and save them with a true and intense curiosity which can bear witness of the history of man. In this way you have a true house, alive, civil, rich and very beautiful.²⁶

The objects collected were not expected to set a rhythm, convey freedom and abstraction, that is, to be the embodiment of beauty in itself. Rather, they were to raise an atmosphere; of periods with historical styles, of countries with geographical styles and topical interests and in that way they symbolised ideas

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²⁶ Tedeschi, M. 'Consigli per la casa' in *Domus* n. 226, 1948, p. 3.

The question that Tedeschi raised around the theme of arranging the home, included; "mobili essenziali, o esatti; Mobili in serie; Fuori serie; Bellezza nella casa; Mobili vecchi e collezionismo; Composizione e colore.

of beauty. The beauty of the house consisted of three elements; colours, composition, and cultural means which was gained through the arts. Works of art were not necessarily luxury items or subject to expensive materials. A chair was beautiful whether it was made out of fir tree or mahogany. One had to look at its form which came before beauty. Following this thought, Ponti maintained that the architect was not only a constructor, he was an artist and adviser who could transmit the overall expression of the inhabitant into the interior. He stated in "his book of ideas", *In Praise of Architecture* that

... the architect (the artist) building a house should not look for praise of esthetic, formal, or stylistic values, or of values grounded in taste. These values are soon dated. The highest praise he must aspire to is to be told by the owners of the house, "Sir, in the house you built for us we live (or lived) happily. It is dear to us. It is a happy episode of our life." But for such a compliment the architect must pay more attention to the owners than to esthetics (and only thus will reach permanent esthetic values, expressed by means of right forms, of forms esthetically beyond discussion, true forms, human forms).

(This is the "human genesis" of architecture.)

The architect (the artist) must interpret the character of the man who lives in the house, of each man in each house, he must build houses to be lived in by men who are alive. ... Man is not to be measured; man is a character to be understood.

(This is the "psychological genesis" of architecture.)²⁷

In this sense, architecture as interior design, was a personal act corresponding both to the ideas of the architect and the client. In the editorial 'Architettura e costume' in 1949, Ponti made the parallel between architecture and the style of fashion clothing.²⁸ Architecture had to create a style that could speak about the inhabitant and his way of life. The house would be one expression of his personal taste, just as his clothes, and diet. This is an important shift in the editorial terminology from that of Rogers who had perceived the house through its moral symbolism, that it was a representation of the inhabitants' consciousness. It was with Ponti that the direction of the magazine was forming a closer identity of a class although it recognised that there were distinctions and differences between individuals. Illustrating specific products and rhetoric, the images signalled a particular bourgeois culture. In that way *Domus* established a visual and written vocabulary that became known to the bourgeois reader as soon as he understood his home as a site for 'civiltà'.

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²⁷ Ponti, G. (1960) 'The Architect, the Artist' in *In Praise of Architecture*, p. 98.

²⁸ Ponti, G. 'Architettura e costume' in *Domus* n. 234, 1949, p. XIII.

'Una casa non finisce mai'

In the article entitled 'Una casa non finisce mai' ("a house never finishes") in the September issue of 1949, Ponti explained the complexity of the home and thereby argued for the special role of the architect. He asserted that the architect must offer an elastic design, to make a room rather than a shop window or an exhibition stand. The architect also needed to be engaged in events, in life, and in the history of the inhabitants. In this way a house never finishes. The architect must be the adviser, the guide for those who prepare a house, for the development of their taste, and how to enrich the house. It was not his role to design the plans and furniture and assume a fixed design. He must know how to advise, how to arrange other materials and procedures (fabric, wood, stone, varnish, etc.), books and objects. That is, to educate the taste for 'collezionismo', and the curiosity, the love, the knowledge for our artistic production which are the graces of our country. The collection should reflect the various curiosities and enjoyments of the inhabitant who had shown attentiveness and culture in his choice. More than being pedantic erudition and serving as a classifier, the selection reflected the extent of a taste which spanned from authentic antique and modern art works, paintings and sculpture of a particular period, from high artistic production to popular art. That is, it was a testimony of the arts and of costumes.²⁹ The works expressed a meaning of a particular period or a style, and of the value to which the inhabitant gave to the object. A particular attention was made to the arrangement in the room and how the objects could be viewed in full. The photographs that followed the article were made from a house occupied by Elena Cremaschi (someone given no further identification) and showed isolated objects and arrangements. [fig. 26] There were: a group of ceramics by Nove (a hen, duck, rabbit, and fish that all had lids), and a table set with glasses from Bohemia (the table was beautifully laid out, a dinner set for eight with cloth napkins matching the table-cloth). Other illustrations included two pictures made by very different techniques; a landscape and a picture of flowers in three-dimensions from 1800. There was a series of horses of blue china from Fornace Carrega in Parma; Marte e Venere ceramic figures by Fausto Melotti; radio furniture by Gio Ponti; a bookshelf-bar fixed to the wall by Gio Ponti which was decorated with figures and ceramic objects; a writing desk and bookshelf by Gio Ponti; and two new lamps by Gio Ponti which had particular illumination effects, one of which appeared twice. This house showed its pride in keeping artistic objects from particular artists and designers. That was the image which Ponti provided. These objects were not of anonymous design, without an author, but represented a particular epoch, style and conventions interpreted by an artist, and thereby gained an added symbolism of social status. It was the house of the art-oriented bourgeois who was in the privileged position of being able to possess things, keep them and even encouraged to add to the collection. It

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²⁹ Ponti, G. 'Una casa non finisce mai' in *Domus* n. 238, 1949, pp. 13-17.



Fig. 1. La galleria di ceramiche di Sesto e la sala per i servizi di Sesto.

Una casa non finisce mai

di Franco Moretti

L'architetto disegna alcuni modelli, sceglie e realizza una loro disposizione spaziale, che presenta agli abitanti, allo stesso modo, altri spaziali (con materiali e finiture) — questa è la casa. Ma non, un grande architetto, costruisce — quando è la

Fig. 26.- 'Una casa non finisce mai' *Domus* n. 238 (1949).
Beauty, harmony and excellent craftsmanship were deliberately focused upon in the portrayal of this home. The meeting of opposites between the elegance of the table set and the ceramic animals was however, striking and fantastical - and a sign that a use of the imagination should be celebrated.

seems then, that a unity of class was forged through these specific items, giving an existing model of a cultured home. Ponti explained this idea in another article in 1949 about the works of the architect/designer, Pietro Chiesa, where he emphasised the importance of being active in society and to produce; because "at the end of the day we live inside history, not merely exist, and to be in history, still alive, does not count. What matters is the work which is done. What matters is the life-work. In this way one lives in history."³⁰ For Ponti, Chiesa was an unique example of that excellent execution characteristic of Italian craftsmanship and that made the stamp of Italian design abroad, just as 'qualité française', 'made in England' and 'made in Germany' bore a certain guarantee for quality of production. [fig. 27] According to Joseph Rykwert however, in a letter to the author of this thesis, Chiesa's work corresponded to a certain Milanese taste at the time that Ponti gave space to in the magazine. There was an element of opportunism about *Domus*, yet with a notable hesitation, he argued. It gave space to the new, with reservations, doubts, and affinities, careful not to lose sight of quality in the new.³¹ In that way, Ponti had recognised the complexity and refinement of Pietro Chiesa's character and works when he wrote:

In the *classical* pieces there is the 'maestro', the professional, the *intelligent man* who maintains the work under supervision and draws it to a perfection; in the *romantic* pieces and 'mechanistic' we see the artist in movement with his temptations always resolved with style and vigilant mind. In fact, in this *play* we approach a man with his indulgence, we approach a man with taste, a man of *feelings* and we distance ourselves from the intelligent man.³² [Ponti's italics]

Piero Chiesa exposed diversity both in his own work and in his home. The various rooms were equipped with furniture from various epochs and countries. The rooms included; two dogs of popular arts (hunting dogs); dogs in majolica and an old bagpipe; on the table, which was in ebony from the Caucasus, a Roman sculpture, and a gilded pistol owned by a French general, with an inscription "Solferino"; two ducks and Chinese vases from 1500; a monster made from shells (Dutch sailor art) and a bottle of prayers (a popular French art); Garibaldi polishing the image of Italy: an example of popular art; a small idol in bronze; a black sculpture; sailors' tools, and embroidery from 1800 as arranged on the walls, fabrics both Italian and English. In the glass fronted cupboard in the room of the Signora there were, Italian papier mâché, a Roman excavated mosaic, Chinese porcelain and Murano glass. From Pietro Chiesa's study the photographs showed a country table from 1500, a collection of ivory, a Bolognese kitchen cupboard from 1600, a crucifix in the manner of

³⁰ Ponti, G. 'L'opera di Pietro Chiesa' in *Domus* n. 234, 1949, p. 33.

³¹ A letter from Joseph Rykwert to the author of this thesis, dated 20th January 1997.

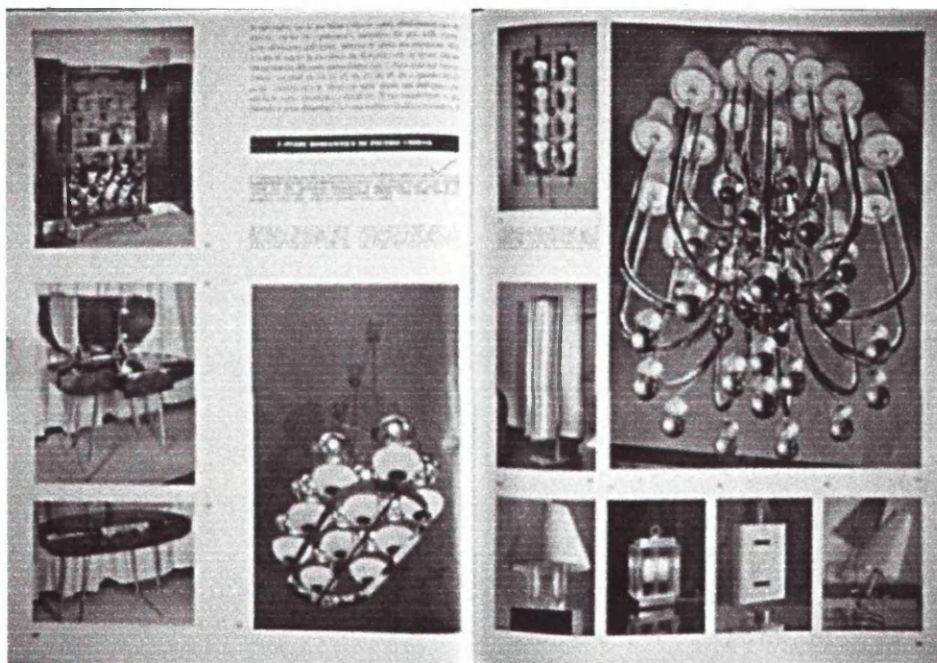
³² Ponti, G. 'L'opera di Pietro Chiesa' *ibid.*, p. 42

Giotto, a Gothic Madonna and, on the wall, a very old Madonna of the Procession. In the room of the Signora one could see English furniture from 1700, and a Romantic chair inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The living room showed illustrations of a Chinese tapestry from 1700, a Chinese Buddha in wood, and two identical small armchairs from 1800. The writing desk of the Signora was Venetian and Romantic and varnished in black and painted, the chair was embroidered in small stitch, on the table was a collection of French almanacs from 1800. In the living room the main piece of furniture was made of mahogany and encrusted with Parisian marble with a silver handle (made in Piedmont by a cabinet maker at the end of 1700).³³ This great collection of objects from different cultures initiated the later claim and proposal of 'la "casa senza frontiere"' ('a house without frontiers') (1954) which will be discussed in the following chapter. It seems from the photographs that Chiesa gave the different objects equal respect as they were arranged so as each could be appreciated fully. Moving from one room to another one is offered a kind of history. A history of the inhabitant and a formalistic history of what objects he chose to collect. The reader knows nothing about how he got them or where but, by following the captions and descriptions of the photographs, one starts to learn the visual language of certain styles - Gothic, Roman, Chinese, and in this way one gains a visual knowledge of the material. This yet again defined the very different approach to understanding the house from Rogers's ideology where there had been no trace of identifying artistic objects or stylistic features. Instead, an emphasis had been laid on inter-communication between people and objects, and to express the use of the client's intellect by drawing attention to particular objects within their overall setting.

Ponti had already formulated the essence of his ideas on the house in his first editorial for *Domus* in 1928, 'La casa all'italiana'.³⁴ The Italian house was the house of 'conforto' where people enjoyed living and developed their taste and outlook on life. The house was an expression of those who lived in it and not only a 'machine to live in'. The so-called 'conforto' did not only rely on necessary things, needs, the ease of our lives and the organisation of the household. The 'conforto' was something superior. It was a measurement for our thinkers. With its simplicity it saluted our habits, with its large hospitality it gave the sense of a trusting and diverse life and, finally, it opened up to outside and communicated with nature. The Italian house offered one's spirit a recreation of itself in a relaxing vision of peace. This was the fullest meaning of the beautiful Italian word, 'il conforto'. An example of this 'conforto' was a country house by Marcello Piacentini, published in the following issue; a construction, simple and well proportioned which kept a good relation to each part of the house. The ornamentation was true to itself. That is, the materials

³³ Ponti, G. 'L'opera di Pietro Chiesa' *ibid.* Captions for photographs include pages 46-49.

³⁴ Ponti, G. 'La casa all'Italiana' in *Domus, architettura e arredamento dell'abitazione moderna in città e in campagna*. 15 gennaio Anno I - n. 1, 1928.



Chiesa shows his ability to master a great variety of materials and forms - from heavy Baroque forms to simple 'modern' lamps. Within this range of lamps the bourgeois could find the 'image' that he wanted represented in his home.

Fig. 27.- 'L'opera di Pietro Chiesa' *Domus* n. 234 (1949).

did not pretend to be anything else than what they were - wood was wood and marble was marble. A material was not painted as to imitate another material. The simple decoration of the interior was a testimony of the refined taste of the architect and that of the client. With a flourish of description of the interior, Luigi Piccianto emphasised the colour contrast between the light colours of the wall against the lively furniture. Everything was simple and had a perfect execution of craftsmanship. It was a well built house and very comfortable, a house that managed to offer good life.³⁵ Significantly, Ponti's idea of 'conforto' described the ideal attitude that the client exposed towards the house in the sense that it was not restricted to physical comfort - "the ease of our lives" - but included a spiritual tranquillity that was brought about by the perfect union between different aspects of the house. Each element, physical and mental, was meant to fortify and strengthen the other. The origins for the concept of comfort and its changing conceptions had been laid out in Sigfried Giedion's book *Mechanization Takes Command* from which an article on the subject had appeared in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 217 (1947) under the title, 'Il progresso delle comodità' so the readers were already familiar with his ideas. According to Giedion, the word 'comfort' in its Latin origin meant to strengthen, yet the notion of comfort meant different things to different civilisations. Comfort could be achieved from many directions. It amounted to whatever man held necessary for his fortifying, his strengthening. Tracing ideas of comfort from the middle ages to the present, Giedion argued that up until the late nineteenth century it was associated with physical posture and particularly that of sitting. From then on, as mechanisation took command, it was seen in terms of designing furniture that encouraged mobility and flexibility. The West, after the eighteenth century, identified comfort with convenience, man should order and control his intimate surroundings so that they may yield him the utmost ease. Giedion, furthermore, pointed out another dimension of comfort that originated in the middle ages. He argued that the medieval comfort involved the configuration of space. Comfort was the atmosphere with which man surrounded himself and in which he lived. It was something that eluded the grasp of hands alone. A medieval room seemed finished even when it contained no furniture. It was never bare. Whether a cathedral, a refectory, or a burgher chamber, it lived in its proportions, its materials, its form.³⁶ Identifying with this sensual character of comfort, *Domus* represented the idea of comfort including both physical and psychological satisfaction. It was the task of the architect to define it and to fulfil for the client. He was a professional who learnt about the client's way of life and tried to express that personality in the architecture - he tried to make

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³⁵ Piccianto, L. 'Una casa di campagna disegnata da Marcello Piacentini (casa giobre della Bitta, presso Roma)' in *Domus, architettura e arredamento dell'abitazione moderna in città e in campagna*. 15 febbraio Anno I - n. 2, 1928.

³⁶ Giedion, S. (1975) *Mechanization Takes Command, a contribution to anonymous history*. W. W Norton & Company, New York, London. See particularly part V, 'Mechanization encounters human surroundings'.

him feel comfortable in his house. Designing architecture was not a matter of following standardisation and a set typology. The particular house/architecture depended on the history of the individual client - his tradition meeting with his way of living. A work of architecture was a work of art, not just as a structure but it represented something different from what it concretely was, namely a thought. A thought by its creator which was adopted and evolved by the inhabitant.

From this description, it is clear that *Domus* addressed different questions put forward by Ernesto Rogers and Gio Ponti. Now in 1948, the orientation of the play between history and the present pointed to a mutual environment where their placement together created an atmosphere of the international. This concept was translated into the pages of *Domus* where the inhabitant of the home (and hence the reader) could, through illustrations and captions, become familiar with the various styles of different epochs and how they were composed and corresponded to a new setting. *Domus* became a field for ideas rather than a promoter of a standard pattern. Ponti promoted the idea of 'pluralism' - which was thought as a democratic idea rather than a composition of architectural styles. *Domus* was concerned with the interior of the home where the idea of 'collezionismo' took shape and an awareness of 'civiltà'. The inhabitant must be engaged in building up his home, know the history of antiques and be particularly attentive to imitations. He should be knowledgeable about form and craftsmanship of particular epochs and not to be deceived. Gaining a visual knowledge - that was rooted in the Italian artistic heritage - he selected with sincerity the honest piece of work and created his home as an expression of the cycle of his own life and identity, growing and changing as the mood of the time.

2.3

'La "casa senza frontiere"'

2.3.1

The house without frontiers opens up to international relations

Ponti promoted good design in *Domus* in the context of various designed objects based on expressions of different personalities, epochs and countries. It played a complex role as a magazine promoting 'good taste' and encouraged architects to create an individual expression. The home, the expression of taste, was composed of carefully selected objects without provoking a feeling of pretence or a fake setting. Within that context, one aspect of modernity which *Domus* proposed was internationalism. The 'modern' bourgeois was the international figure who was able to face the accelerated speed of life and gain a formalistic, visual knowledge of other countries' lifestyles from which his experiences were exhibited in the home. This was the 'modern' version of *Domus's* 'collezionismo'. The magazine was no longer so much concerned with a mutual setting for the new and the old. The idea of 'collezionismo' was now in the 1950's a collection of 'modern' designers and ideas, to show that the home was a home of a 'modern' culture and the intellectual - including art works, books (special emphasis was on art books as one can read their title on the spine), a big enough living room for entertaining, and designers'

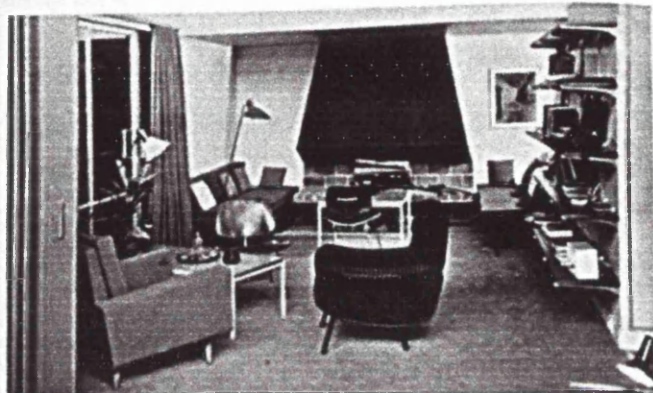
furniture.³⁷ Additionally, particular attention was paid to an American characteristic in the living room, the fireplace, which was illustrated as one of the central features of the American home. Seen in its natural setting in the living room, the arrangement of the furniture in the room was drawn to the fire in the same way as the television would later become the focus of attention. As such, it represented a nostalgia for nature in the fast growing technological society as in Frank Lloyd Wright's houses. It symbolised the centre where the family came together and gave them time to reflect and communicate with each other when looking at and through the fire.

Within this context *Domus* published an article entitled 'La "casa senza frontiere"' ("the house without frontiers") (1954). This was a joint project between Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, England, Italy, Holland, Sweden and United States. The proposal was for a house which the citizen of Europe and America could have if the products of each country would be able to circulate freely without borders. The interior design of the house was total: textiles, glass, devices, etc. Each object had a label which gave information of the country of origin, manufacturer, and the price, and the number of hours of the work in making the particular object of that country.³⁸ The illustrations of the project showed; the living room furnished with two lamps, one Italian and another American, an American table and a chair, Italian and French armchairs and a combined American bookcase. [fig. 28a,b] The living room was separated from the bedroom by a sliding wall, a French folding screen and divided from the dining room with a wall of thin oriental plate fixed onto American nylon and showed a glass vase from Germany, a wooden cup excavated in Denmark, and Italian and American lamps. The bath, services and shower were in a unique surrounding; the shower was closed off by a plastic curtain. One should notice that there was a water cushion in the bath in order to be able to read, applied with sucker cups; the soap-dish was magnetised to the ventilation cabinet that held the bathrobe; and there was an American adjustable sock-dryer. As well as raising the question of taste and 'collezionismo', this kind of project also took for granted that the taste of the bourgeois coincided in different countries and that they would wish for the same products and devices - the folding screens, Italian lamps, combined furniture and technical devices that both supported hygiene and offered the good life.

Thought of within this framework, *Domus* itself represented a house without frontiers. Learning from different cultures, it was intrigued by Brazil and the prolific architectural output of Oscar Niemeyer. It was passionate about

³⁷ Further reading about codes of connotations in photography, see Barthes, R. (1977) *Image Music Text*. Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath. Fontana Press, London. Especially the essay, 'The Photographic Message'.

³⁸ La "casa senza frontiere" - Peter G. Harnden, Lanfranco Bombelli Tiravanti, arch.tti, Robert Ponagry, grafico in *Domus* n. 294, 1954, pp. 20-23.



La "casa senza frontiere"

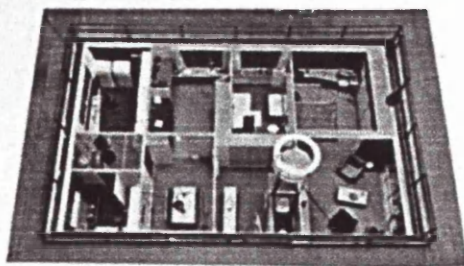
Walter G. Murphy.
L'architetto della "casa senza frontiere".
Robert Venturi, grafico.

Una casa disintegrata, smontabile e viaggiante, creata con mobili e oggetti di ogni paese: Australia, Danimarca, Francia, Germania, Inghilterra, Italia, Svezia, Stati Uniti. La casa che il cittadino europeo potrebbe trovare, se i prodotti di ogni paese potessero liberamente circolare senza frontiere.

L'agenzia europea e il consiglio nazionale per la produttività, organizzatori dell'Unice, hanno presentato ora a Milano questa casa, che ha già percorso Germania, Australia e Francia.

Ideata da Peter Harnden, architetto americano della e presentata tra le architetture dell'IMA di Parigi, allestita dall'architetto italiano Luciano Bombelli (Torino), con l'assistenza di Robert Venturi, architetto grafico svizzero. È una risposta perfettamente studiata: la struttura di ispirazione americana è in stile moderno, costruita in uno dei diversi paesi d'Europa, perché in ciascuno potrebbe essere fatta d'istinto, senza « tela » fissata e vetrata in pannelli di legno e tubolari in acciaio.

Il progetto: due famiglie con un figlio e una sorella, un fratello maggiore, un fratello minore, un fratello minore e un fratello minore. Il progetto è ispirato dalla storia di una casa parigina costruita da « modernisti » italiani.



La casa disintegrata, smontabile e viaggiante, creata con mobili e oggetti di ogni paese: Australia, Danimarca, Francia, Germania, Inghilterra, Italia, Svezia, Stati Uniti. La casa che il cittadino europeo potrebbe trovare, se i prodotti di ogni paese potessero liberamente circolare senza frontiere.

Fig. 28a.- "La "casa senza frontiere" Domus n. 294 (1954).

Similar to experiencing the real exhibition, the reader is here allowed to enter the interiorspace, and to visualise himself at the centre of his 'own' home.



Fig. 28b. "La "casa senza frontiere" Domus n. 294 (1954).

Argentina and Mexico while broadening its geographical horizons to take in America, the poetic way of life in Japan, Israel, Finland and the countries of the East as presented by personal experiences of Ponti's friends, Wirkkala, Fontana, Sottsass, Eames, among others. Eames photographed Saarinen's TWA terminal for *Domus* as 'crowded architecture', Wirkkala photographed for *Domus* the Indian colour of Le Corbusier's architecture in Chandigarh, Melotti wrote in *Domus* as a poet, Sottsass made *Domus* into his own extraordinary diary, and Fontana provided the covers.³⁹ Transparency and lightness were also important qualities in Ponti's architecture thinking. For him, Charles Eames with his reticular structure chairs, Saarinen with his TWA building, Buckminster Fuller with the reticular structure of his domes and Calder with his giant mobiles exemplified this thought and which was further added to by George Nelson's furniture as well as lights by Isamu Noguchi, both frequently appeared in the furnishing of the home, either clearly identified in the captions or, if not, the designers of the objects became visually known by the attentive reader. The myth of the international became a reality in terms of experience and direct interchange providing a specific atmosphere that the reader would translate into his own home. The magazine sought in this way, advice from critics and artists all over the world for news about new talents and of diversity.⁴⁰ It was seeking those who already had a name for themselves and also those who had artistic sensitivity and were creating unique pieces from their research. Spontaneous expressions and experiences of local culture and architectural know-how were agreeably put together since - as Ponti loved to repeat - these works were conceived in a state of grace. One of the critics who contributed articles to *Domus*, as well as working "underground", was Joseph Rykwert.⁴¹ He remembers Ponti as,

... operating very much on instinct and personal sympathy: if he liked someone, he would give them a niche in *Domus* or some other enterprise of his ... and if it didn't work out, he would move them sideways or (in extreme cases) withdraw support: but he was very loyal to his likes.

... Ponti loved Mollino who was almost his opposite: philanderer, pornographer, racing-car driver, fanatical skier, self-styled surrealist. But he resisted when I introduced Ponti to the work of Gino Valle, until one day he told me that I had been right and he had been wrong, that Valle was first-rate and he would 'atone' for his mistake - which he did, publishing much work by Valle.⁴²

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³⁹ Ponti, L (1990) *Gio Ponti. The Complete Work 1923 - 1978*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 241.

⁴⁰ From a conversation between the author of this thesis and Lisa Licitrica Ponti in Milano, April 1996.

⁴¹ According to Lisa Ponti (1990) *ibid.*, p 241.

⁴² A letter from Joseph Rykwert to the author of this thesis, dated 20th January 1997.

Writing along similar lines, Lisa Ponti recalls her father publishing works of architects based on his fascination for their work and for the sake of providing information of the new:

Admiration [was] immediately translated into "promotion". Promoting is an aspect of designing, deriving from the same concern for the present. Do you admire this poet? Publish his poems. Do you admire this architect? Make it possible for him to build. This was the way Gio Ponti worked, and his two magazines, *Domus* and *Stile*, consisted of recommendations and invitations, to anyone who was listening - backed up solely by his own vision and experience. Driven by hope about the possible. Hope is ingenious.

And, she continued,

Ponti's magazines are an expression of his idea of "information". He was not concerned with monopoly, did not care about priority, sometimes he did not even bother to sign his work. What mattered to him was that information should be made immediately available to everyone, and that the magazine's pages should be put at the disposal of its contributors, so that they could give free expression to their own creativity in them. Gio Ponti allowed people to use his magazines to fight their duels. ... He wanted to bring different talents to people's attention. And his enthusiasm was of a demanding kind, although candid in its expression.⁴³

If perceivable by the reader of *Domus*, 'la casa senza frontiere' would therefore be a collection of admirable artists representing their time. The style that embraced the international was only available to the few. The objects in these homes were identifiable as designers' products and people less financially capable were able to buy only a limited number of items. As is clear, when looking at *Domus*, Gio Ponti did not concern himself with the working class home or the question of educating the lower classes. The target was that of raising the taste of the industrial middle class who was conscious of the importance of the international market. As a result, the appearance of articles and discussion in *Domus* was in accordance with what was happening in the society around it. Before, in the 1930's and 1940's Gio Ponti had praised Italy for its excellent craftsmanship but now, in the 1950's, designers had to enlarge their vision in order to be recognised on the international market. Yet, despite the domestic setting being characterised by pluralism, it was that of tranquillity according to Gio Ponti. Reviewing a flat where Italian art and design, Finnish, Swedish, and American had a dialogue with each other, the

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⁴³ Ponti, L. (1990) *ibid.* pp. 17 - 18.

writer concluded, in 'Una porta, e nuovi mobili' that the intention was to create an atmosphere of a conversation by using few elements placed in space so as not to disturb the dominant feeling of order and calm. As in a harmonious conversation, silence was necessary. Similarly, the space and objects that we circulate call for quietness.⁴⁴ [fig. 29] Keeping with the concept of 'the house without frontiers', the text that followed the article was reminiscent of a design catalogue where details were specified such as the designers' names, countries, the setting of the objects and, the manufacturers of some of the objects. The reader would thus receive the information about what was the latest on the market almost immediately. 'La casa senza frontiere' therefore not only expressed Ponti's idea of 'conforto' which had been described with the house that never finishes but it expressed something of oneself, the status or the image that one wanted to give - to be international, to have knowledge of form, and to be able to differentiate between styles, to be familiar with the goddess of the arts and of not being afraid of the realm of fantasy. The home was loaded with connotations, legible by the readers of *Domus* who had similar cultural capital and the privileged access to knowledge.

2.3.2

'Modernità' finds its setting within notions of comfort and luxury

The concept of 'modernità', associated increasingly with ideas of comfort and luxury rather than with necessity, became an ever more important element within an essentially bourgeois culture of the home. Comfort expressed better than any cultural disposition, "the technique of the body" of the modern bourgeois society, as Tomàs Maldonado later argued in the article 'L'idea di comfort' in *Il Futuro della modernità*. It regulated urban life, ritualised the form of conduct, and, above all, the attitudes and postures of the body in relation to furniture and objects of domestic use.⁴⁵ This sense of modernity provided the base-line for Italy's entry into foreign market-places. In the aftermath of the Second World War, design in Italy had been ideologically linked to an ideal of improved standards of living based upon the consumption of previously unobtainable consumer goods, many of which were produced in Italy for the first time in these years. This was even a fact in 1951 when over half of Italy's dwellings had no drinking water supply and no internal toilet.⁴⁶ The composition of the Italian market consisted therefore mainly of the middle class residents of cities in the North, within the industrial triangle of

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⁴⁴ "Una porta, e nuovi mobili" in *Domus* n. 321, 1956, p. 21.

⁴⁵ Maldonado, T. (1990) 'L'idea di comfort' in *Il futuro della modernità*. Feltrinelli, Milano, p. 98.

⁴⁶ Clarke, M. (1995) *ibid.*, p. 363.

Milan, Turin and Genoa. In the early years of the 1950's, goods such as vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, television sets and eventually cars, with a strong design input were directed to the economically well-off client whose home was a status symbol. By 1953 Ponti stated that

... our ideal of the 'good life' and the level of taste and thought expressed by our home and manner of living are all part of the same thing.⁴⁷

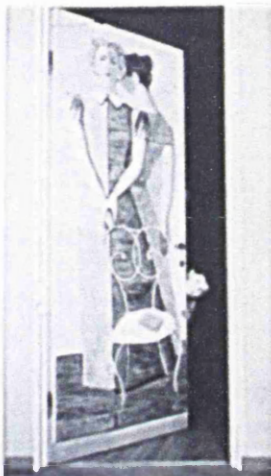
Despite the apparent contradictions in the Italian society *Domus* lacked interest in facing sociological and ideological responsibility concerning the changing aspects of the home and raised no questions about what reasons lay behind shifts in the social structure. A common change after the war affected the social structure of the whole of the Western world, namely, that many women went out onto the labour market and as a result they had less time to spend in the kitchen and on domestic work. The need for a more efficient use of space also called for experiments that accelerated the speed of life. In America the microwave was invented in 1954 as well as other new appliances which were aimed at the American passion for labour-saving devices. With names like Boil-Quick, Redi-Baker, Fry-Ryte, they promised to help the amateur to prepare food correctly with minimal skill, time, or energy. And for those consumers who thought they had everything, there was always another miraculous device - an egg poacher or a corn popper - to make life even easier.⁴⁸ *Stile Industria* (which notably was dedicated to industrial design and production) made a gesture of acknowledgement such as appeared, for example, in a review of the work of the Swedish ceramic artist, Stig Lindberg, in 1956. The article pointed out that changes in society affected the design process of the designer and his obligation towards the user of the object.⁴⁹ Using this Nordic example, the magazine drew attention to the most dramatic social change that affected the planning of the house. That is, there was a need for houses and especially the kitchen to become smaller. The woman, the former housewife, was now out at work and a domestic help was perhaps impossible to obtain. As a consequence, the home had to become easier to organise. With other cooking requirements, cutlery and domestic elements became a subject of research into heat resistance, tolerance (rigidity), space compactness, etc. [fig. 30] The designer, Stig Lindberg in this case, made an effort to try to meet the socio-cultural needs of Sweden (which also could be applied to various other international destinations) which meant that he tried to find the appropriate form of the object by drawing out the true properties of the material. The form was in constant evolution subject to technological

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⁴⁷ Ponti, G. "Italy's Bid on the World Market", in *Interiors*, 1953, New York, p. 79.

⁴⁸ Pulos, A.J. (1988) *The American Design Adventure. 1940-1975*. The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, London England, p. 143.

⁴⁹ Ceramica di Stig Lindberg: la produzione di serie in una grande fabbrica svedese in *Stile Industria* n. 6, 1956.



Una porta, e nuovi mobili

Questa porta è un disegno di Gio Ponti, un arco a doppia cerniera e di una persona di famiglia. E i mobili nel soggiorno sono anch'essi di Gio Ponti, diversi e gelosamente nuovi, hanno la schietta linea di apertura e luce, perché vi si possa appoggiare sopra un braccio durante la conversazione. Le sedute sono composte in quattro linee, nella e intorno al tavolo quadrato in legno, il tavolo centrale della stanza; due poltrone sono delle stesse dimensioni, una nera e la « bianca » che ripete.

Il tavolo basso è l'ideale, in legno massiccio naturale, nel lato, due quadrati in ceramica di Portofino e una coppia in marmo.

Il tavolo basso è l'ideale, in legno massiccio naturale, nel lato, due quadrati in ceramica di Portofino e una coppia in marmo.

Un disegno di Gio Ponti, normale per una porta.



Fig. 29.- 'Una porta, e nuovi mobili' *Domus* n. 321 (1956).

The reader becomes familiar with the visual rhetoric that *Domus* offers and starts to understand the travelling zone from which the magazine operates.

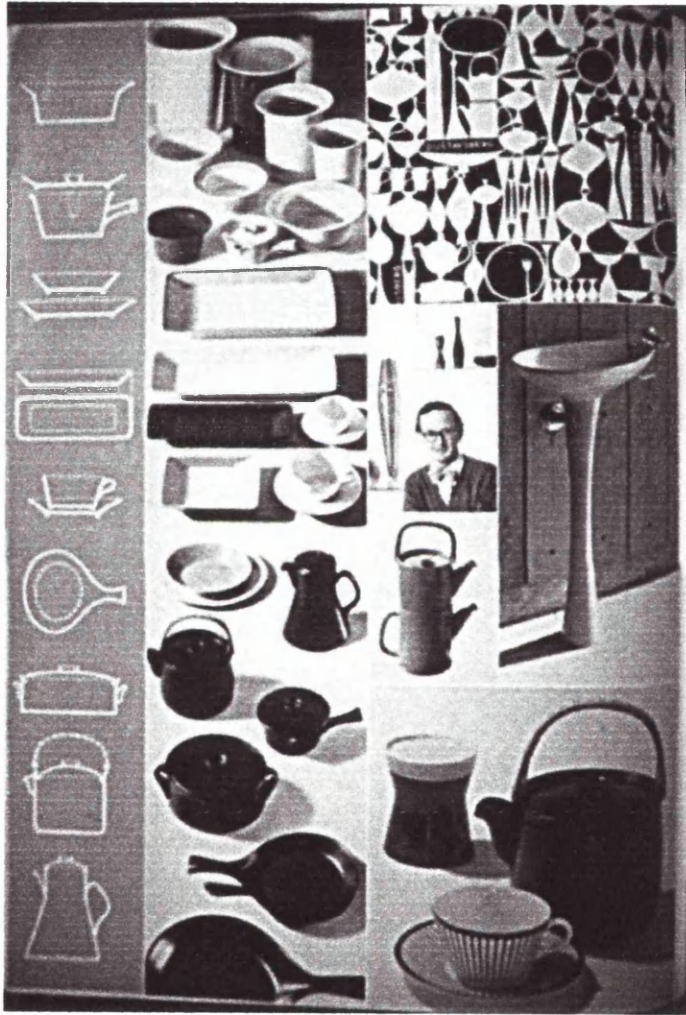


Fig. 30.- 'Ceramica di Stig Lindberg: la produzione di serie in una grande fabbrica svedese' *Stile Industria* n. 6 (1956).
Despite the sense of social commitment in the text, the layout of the page illustrates the objects by Lindberg deprived of any social meaning. Their 'natural' setting is ignored and the objects are depicted in isolation.

changes and new materials; so with every innovation, the problem re-emerged of how to reach the appropriate form.

The position that *Domus* took up on the contrary, was to draw out the presumed characteristics, or interests, that particular countries engaged in. Within that context it showed examples of kitchens identified as Swedish, French, Italian, American and 'a kitchen for the lady of the house'. Notably, there was only one example from each country and no apparent comparison was made, or argumentation, on the selection according to different social circumstances. Also, the American kitchen was repeatedly made as the reference point for its technological advances. The kitchen, in itself, was a component of the house most subject to technological changes. At the offset of a social change, or a life-style, the kitchen became the first focal point. Only the bathroom came close to the kitchen in this sense, for its evolution of hygiene and technical performance.⁵⁰ The first kitchen in the series illustrated in *Domus* was 'cucine Svedesi' in 1950. Swedish production of furniture, before and after the war, was defined as made out of wood with extreme simplicity, dismountable, and executed in large production numbers. Moreover, it was acknowledged for its adequate packaging and design for transporting in minimum space. This was because a substantial portion of their production was directed overseas, including that of kitchen furniture. At first production focused on serial furniture, but after a long experience and careful examination, Swedish designers decided to invest in constructing multiple elements - standard and basic components which were not complete furniture.⁵¹ The Italian kitchen, described in 1954 by Mario Tedeschi, had America as its point of comparison.⁵² Notably he showed no photographs, instead there were sketches and technical drawings of cupboards and corner details. The main concern of the article was to demonstrate the comfort that should be available while working in the kitchen. That is, height of furniture and cupboards, good light, and it should be easy to clean. These were the new thoughts and requirements from the American kitchen that were transferred to the Italian kitchen of 'today'. The French kitchen was described as colourful, full of life, and as part of the atmosphere and space of the living room. It represented a return to the rural concept of a kitchen "where things took place", the old and a natural way of life.⁵³ The furniture was modern, prefabricated and made up of components. This image was set against that of the laboratory-like, white, isolated, mechanical, and purely instrumental American kitchen. In that way, the American kitchen which *Domus* illustrated in 1956, was a solution of how to compress all function of a kitchen into a

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⁵⁰ For a further reading of the relationship between comfort, hygiene and discipline, see Maldonado, T. (1990) 'L'idea di comfort' in *Il futuro della modernità*. Feltrinelli, Milano.

⁵¹ 'Cucine Svedesi. Cucine ad elementi standard, variamente componibili', Gullberg, J. arch. in *Domus* n. 242, 1950, pp. 35-38.

⁵² Tedeschi, M. 'Una cucine Italiana' in *Domus* n. 292, 1954, pp. 75-78.

⁵³ 'La cucina abitata' - Le cucine francesi di Paris-Match in *Domus* n. 294, 1954, pp. 24-28.

small space with the exact delimitation and utility of space.⁵⁴ The kitchen 'for the lady of the house' was again evaluated against the supremacy of the American kitchen in 'La cucina per la padrona di casa' (1956).⁵⁵ [fig. 31] The oven was incorporated into the furniture and situated at a comfortable height for whoever opened it. The refrigerator was in two compartments for the two different temperatures and came with a key. The key is an interesting feature as it illustrates the different concepts the Americans and Italians have towards eating. One is something of a prohibition, the other is thought of as a joy and a time of communication. The refrigerator was horizontal and part of the kitchen furniture which made it possible to use the space under the window. Although here, in *Domus*, the design was made by Philco and Youngstown, General Electric had been experimenting with alternative configurations for refrigerators since the early 1950s. One proposal was a horizontal refrigerator, which took advantage of a new insulating material that reduced the bulk and weight of a refrigerator to the point that it could be hung like a cabinet above a kitchen counter. Even those refrigerators that retained the conventional form had their interiors reorganised to provide specialised compartments to meet different temperature and humidity requirements. A major change was the development of a separate freezer compartment to store the increasingly popular quick-frozen foods. A great deal of design effort was put into relocating the fundamental components of the traditional cooker and to apply veneers. One arrangement that received great attention in the mid-1950s, and was shown in *Domus*, had the oven and its controls above the cooker, at eye level.⁵⁶ These kitchens were seen as a setting where physical comfort relied on the notion of flexible opportunities that component furniture and domestic machines provided. Learning about these possibilities, the reader was offered, by using his imagination, a visual travel zone without acquiring further knowledge about the particular culture. The phrase "a photograph says more than a thousand words" could apply here as the captions and text served as "a kind of secondary vibration almost without consequence."⁵⁷ Ponti had, however, already predicted the importance of the photographic message in 1932 when he wrote that "the photographic aberration is for many things *our only reality*; it is for many things our very *consciousness*, and it is therefore our *judgement*. It constitutes a large part of our visual perception."⁵⁸ (Ponti's italics) Through the image, the representation of 'modernità' in the post-war period was set against the ideal vision of the American life-style which here

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⁵⁴ 'Una cucina Americana' Warren Platner, arch. in *Domus* n. 316, 1956, p. 60.

⁵⁵ 'La cucina per la padrona di casa' in *Domus* n. 321, 1956, pp. 57 - 58.

⁵⁶ For further reading, see Pulos, A.J. (1988) *The American Design Adventure. 1940-1975*. The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, London England. Particularly, chapter 3 'Design and Domestic Elegance. *Better Design for better living*.'

⁵⁷ Barthes, R. (1977) 'The Photographic Message' in *Image Music Text*. Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath. Fontana Press, London. p. 27.

⁵⁸ Ponti, G. 'Discorso sull'arte fotografica' in *Domus* n. 5, 1932. This is cited from Zannier, I. 'Reality and Italian Photography' in G. Celant. (1994) *ibid.* p. 317.

La cucina per la padrona di casa

Kitchen in una parola in Italia le attrezzature che hanno affiorato, per lo meno, il bisogno di una cucina moderna, il forno incorporato nei mobili, e alcuni nel sistema cucina per chi lo vuole, il frigorifero a due porte, per le due diverse temperature, e non lo ultimo, il frigorifero refrigerato, incorporato nei mobili, che sfrutta lo spazio sotto la lavatrice e offre un piano di appoggio.

Questi apparecchi sono della Padua, e i mobili di cucina, in metallo, della Youngstown: mobili e apparecchi hanno misure standard, e sono componibili fra di loro.



Mobili in laminato d'aceto, verniciato in bianco, con piano in "Formica". Il forno elettrico, in acciaio inossidabile, è incorporato nei mobili sopra, ed sfrutta lo spazio per chi debba spuntare, quando è caldo.

Fornice e mobile sono in acciaio, piano del tavolo in "Formica", mobili verniciati.

Fornice e Fornice: la nuova soluzione per incorporare in mobili standard componibili. In il più grande all'attacco della lavatrice, e anche, lavatrice può lavare con un solo piano d'appoggio sotto al tavolo, il tutto, come il forno e allungare al tavolo.

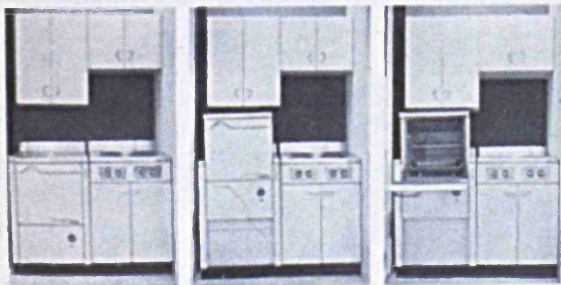


Fig. 31.-'La cucina per la padrona della casa' *Domus* n. 321 (1956).
The compactness and economy of space of this kitchen is particularly celebrated as well as the use of modern materials. It is a 'perfect' kitchen with utility in mind.

was identified in the kitchen. Luxury and comfort were linked to the idea of speed and private consumption and the necessary appliances and devices. Furthermore, *Domus* encouraged housewives to achieve efficiency in the home by planning their domestic duties. With its international examples of kitchen designs, the magazine added to the meaning of 'the house without frontiers', giving the reader a sense for the 'new' and thus a freedom of choice that would ensure comfort and good life.

2.3.3

Diverse ways of communicating one's history

The idea of modernity and projecting the house as a status symbol was not represented as an image or an inconceivable proposition. *Domus*, for example, published articles that gave an account of two very different homes demonstrating international links and cultural settings. These were the homes of Gio Ponti himself in via Dezza and Ernesto Rogers's in the centre of Milan, an area much loved by the French novelist Henri Stendhal. Rogers's bachelor flat, in an eighteenth century house, was a dwelling he acquired after he had been moving from one hotel to another for twenty years.⁵⁹ In his own words, Rogers described the flat as mainly containing objects from his immediate personal history. Objects from his parents' house had almost all been destroyed by the Second World War and those that survived had a sentimental value. [fig. 32a,b] Other objects had been acquired during his trips around the world, or in antique shops, as well as being from BBPR's professional practice. One could identify Mexican, Brazilian, and Peruvian objects, eighteenth century English vases, a Finnish birch bookshelf, a Japanese lamp by Isamu Noguchi, a Tunisian carpet, a small triangular Austrian table from the beginning of eighteenth century, a pre-Thonet Viennese chair from the end of the eighteenth century, as well as a chair by Casano and old Chiavari chairs. Furthermore Rogers used chairs and a sofa designed by his own firm, BBPR studio, made by Arflex. All paintings and pictures were gifts from the artists themselves - Gillo Dorfles, Max Bill, Le Corbusier, Capogrossi, Alexander Calder, Simonetta Vigevani Jung, Marino, Munari, Leger, Vordenberge-Gildewart, and Roberto Sambonet - besides which a big Chinese picture from the Cing dynasty decorated the ceiling of the living room. In the introduction to these visual images, Rogers stressed that the important element, when finding a home, was to appreciate the sentiment of the house itself and not to impose oneself on to it without recognising and respecting the pre-existing environment. His furnishing and the layout of the interior tried to adjust to the scale of the room, its proportion, and to arouse a sense of communication between the two histories, his own and that of the house. This

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⁵⁹ Rogers, E.N. 'Un architetto per sè.' L'appartamento di Ernesto N. Rogers a Milano in *Domus* n. 326, 1957, pp. 21-30.

dialogue was in the Proustian manner of the dialectic of time. It was through memory that one experienced the world. That is to say, explained by Enzo Paci, the present was found by connecting it to our lives, to our work, where the consciousness reflected our life and experience of present society.⁶⁰ The lived experience without prejudice was never neutral, static or immobile. It was never substantive but was always flowing, temporal and dynamic.⁶¹ In Rogers's home the objects evoked memory and made a living space that acted in accordance with his conscience; its harmony was not only embodied in the conformity of objects. It gained an added aesthetic value when a visitor placed himself at the midst of the situation and the conditions of living.

This was a very different presentation from that of Ponti's own home in via Dezza, that appeared complete and integral in 'Una casa a pareti apribili', in *Domus* 1957.⁶² Here the emphasis on history, was of a history arranged by an architect. It was a space of a closed form that should not be altered. This flat, designed by Ponti himself, contained all the Pontian inventions of the plan, furniture and objects that the reader had seen appearing isolated in different articles in *Domus*. In Via Dezza, they were drawn together, for the first time into a complete unity and a true setting. Analysing this interior of Ponti's house for his family, it expresses his notion of a dwelling and how architecture frames a family in a unified space. This was a house where everything derived from the same hand and, one could say, from the same history, because nothing useful was brought from the previous dwellings except that which had a formalistic value or for memory's sake. In that sense, nothing mattered except the sense of unity since everything was new, and the family found itself in an environment almost without surprises. It lived with their closest belongings and those which resembled them the most. [fig. 33a,b] The floor area was not big for its five members but, Ponti pointed out that the plan was able to breathe more with the solution of mobile walls that divided the space (for a separate article see *Domus* n. 320). Three successive folding screens were able to unite all the four rooms along the facade: the two bedrooms of the siblings, the living room, and the room of the mother. This last one could in turn be connected to the father's bedroom-study and the whole became one continuous space by adding the link of the father's room to the living room. The floor of these rooms was a continuity, expressed by ceramic tiles with diagonal lines. The ceiling followed the same pattern in white plaster, with bright and opaque diagonal lines. There was also a continuity within the colour. A unique white and yellow (a bright yellow, like mustard, the soil of Siena) arrangement of colour was presented in everything and every room: floors, carpets, ceramics, furniture and folding screens. The

⁶⁰ Paci, E. 'Fenomenologia e architettura contemporanea' (1958) in *Relazioni e significati III* (1966), Lampugnani Nigri, Milano, p. 187.

⁶¹ Paci, E. 'L'architettura e il mondo della vita' (1958) in *Relazioni e significati III* (1966), p. 154.

⁶² Ponti G. 'Una casa a pareti apribili' in *Domus* n. 334, 1957, pp. 21-35 inclusive.

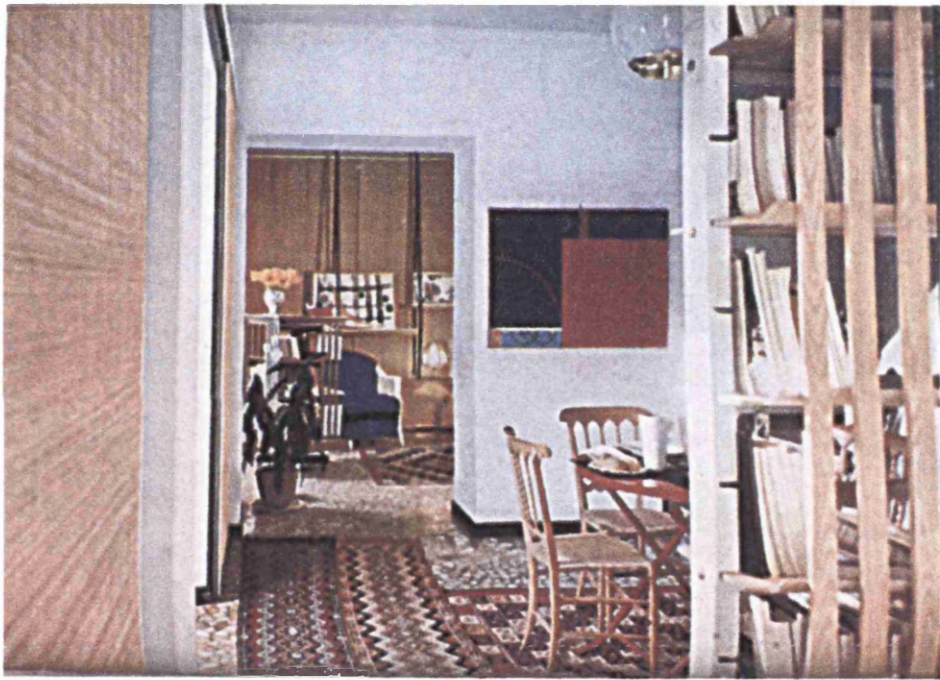


Fig. 32a.- 'Un architetto per sè' *Domus* n. 226 (1957).
Apart from depicting the flexibility of the furnishing, this illustration shows how much Rogers revealed of his way of life by showing the remains of a lunch on the table. This is a space that communicates its subjectivity, its value as lived and dynamic.

Fig. 32b.- 'Un architetto per sè' *Domus* n. 226 (1957).

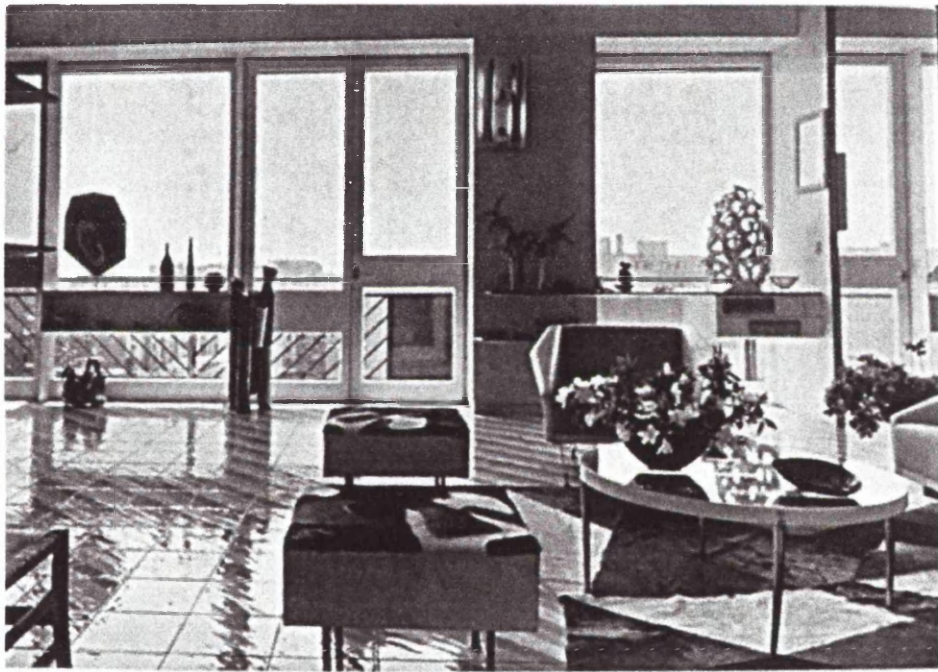


Fig. 33a.-'Una casa a pareti apribili' *Domus* n. 334 (1957).
Every design feature, object and a piece of furniture is in perfect harmony with each other. The plan of the flat is also of particular interest. It explains the transparency of spaces to the reader - that is the visual and physical connection between rooms.

Il complesso delle ali dell'Impero. Il portico, e la platea delle colonne di Mithras. Il tempio, di Ierone, romanesco, e il muro con la porta di arco di decoro, con tempio parietale con rilievi, ornato da Colonna. Il complesso intorno al fondo, i capitelli e di Frusto, con griglia in modo di decoro coltore, rispetto da Chiesa. Decoro e giardino sono di Frusto, ornato di Colonna.

[illegible]

Fig. 33b.- 'Una casa a pareti apribili' Domus n. 334 (1957).

continuous wall of the facade was only one expanse of glass, resolved like a long furnished window, or an organised wall (for a separate article see *Domus* n. 298). It supported, or rather suspended from an overhanging from the glass, a set of shelves and brackets. In this way, the objects were outlined against the sky in a composition which proceeded along the walls onto the intermediate wooden backstage, or wings. The design was always on a continuous level. It was the same as the one which later was reproduced, on another scale, on panels of the walls, or rather furniture which every room had and was preserved. It included, among other things, shelves for books and objects, chest of drawers, and lamps. Some of this furniture was self-lit and brought a special concealed illumination which became detached from the wall and shed light around the room (for a separate article see *Domus* n. 266). Also the bedheads were panels against the walls, and served as furnished panels with shelves, light, bells, boxes etc. (for a separate article see *Domus* n. 228). All furniture was made of elm. All beds were identical as were chairs and tables. Similarly, all chests of drawers and shelves originated from the same design. The disparity was found within the objects, the many ceramics, pictures, terracotta, wickerwork, and mementoes from travels made by the family. The harmony of space and composition symbolised the harmony of the family. The space was a finite space, just as those who lived there were a closed entity as seen in the family portrait from 1934 by Campagli (who was a family friend), a portrait which opened up this article on the house at Via Dezza and illustrated the title page of Lisa Ponti's book on her father. The members of the family were encouraged to communicate through the layout of the interior. The possibility to open up spaces allowed for a change of experience. A device that may have appeared democratic and all-embracing, but, if one takes one step further, one realises that there is no allowance for any individual expression of the inhabitant. Ponti argued that a mutual understanding had to be created between the building, architect and the client. The building must be listened to by the architect, who, from that moment ceased to be creative and became intuitive and interpretative. Furthermore, the client must realise and comply with the idea that a building did not develop from the work of the architect, but on the contrary the work of the architect developed from the building.⁶³ In spite of an emphasis on unity and freedom of space in Via Dezza, there was a set of hierarchies within the layout where, in Ponti's terminology, the room of the mother was the centre for linking the various rooms. Making her almost a religious figure, it was her room that opened and closed in an embrace. The architecture listened yet was all-determined, as in the case of a religious thought. Ponti made the parallel between the mother and the church;

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⁶³ Ponti, G. 'Listening to the building' in *In Praise of Architecture* (1960), p. 242. Ponti also made this as a subject of an article, 'Il nuovo edificio in Milano per il lanificio Rossi' in *Domus* n. 282, 1953.

... our physiological-historical 'constitution' is Catholic. Catholic also is our great love for the family that sees in any woman the mother or a madonna, and that in a madonna sees the mother and is extremely devoted to her, and that sees in any child Jesus or at least an angel, and that drives us mad in the matter of making children. Catholic also is the great goodness of our people that makes them loved even by their war enemies (since we ourselves love them and see them all as "the mother's children") - this goodness and love that is away from home their unconscious "policy" (but their best policy, the only splendid and victorious policy), a foreign policy that remedies so many errors. Their individualism in judging and acting is Catholic. Their blessed incapacity to execute ordered persecutions is Catholic. And if Isabelle Rivière said that Catholics have "*le devoir de l'imprévoyance*" (the duty of being improvident) can't we say that we Italians just have an innate Catholic nature or destiny of *imprévoyance* and act, as artists do, according to passion, genius, and inspiration?⁶⁴ [Ponti's italics]

This statement also explains the faith that Ponti had in the individual and Ettore Sottsass's remark that Ponti wanted to embrace everybody and could never be a radical.⁶⁵ As is repeatedly recognised in the reviews that appeared in the exhibition catalogue, *1928/1973 domus: 45 ans d'architecture design, art*,⁶⁶ Ponti was extremely generous in receiving architects, artists, designers and critics who had something to express. To them he would offer *Domus*, they would be part of a promotion of the 'news of the world' and they would receive a needed breathing-space for their research. It was the individual, more than the collective, that was *Domus's* hallmark, although Gio Ponti understood architecture *for all men and of all men*.⁶⁷ [Ponti's italics] Man had to be nurtured. In his book, *In Praise of Architecture*, Ponti argued that the collective society blunts the moral intention, the moral responsibility of the individual, deprives him of the meaning of existence, of his moral, independent and autonomous gesture, the free gesture of his conscience. He proclaimed:

Religion, a personal act of faith, transfers itself then to a more intimate seat, a secret, higher, more isolated, and needier seat. We give Caesar what belongs to Caesar; we give him more and more. And Caesar, that is, the Organization, compensates and

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⁶⁴ Ponti, G. (1960) 'Architecture, religion' in *In Praise of Architecture* (1960) op. cit. p. 260.

⁶⁵ From a conversation between Ettore Sottsass and the author of this thesis in Milan, April 1996.

⁶⁶ Casati, C.M.; Pica, A.; Ponzio, C.E.; Ratto, G.; Restany, P. (1973) *1928/1973 domus: 45 ans d'architecture design, art*. Musée Des Arts Décoratifs. Pavillon De Marsan. Palais Du Louvre, Paris. Domus Editoriale, Milano.

⁶⁷ Ponti, G. 'Architettura vera ed architettura sognata' in *Domus* n. 233, 1949, p. XIII.

benefits us but also constrains us. The social advantages of the Organization are extraneous to our inner moral world. It does not intervene in the tragedies of our conscience; its evaluation is concerned only with numbers, classifications, and efficiency. The more we are socially taken care of by a humane society, by modern civilization, by the collective organization that is characteristic today of every form of government, the more we are spiritually ignored and isolated as individuals....

He further insisted, expressing his devotion to the Church, that

... the individual, the single man exists today only in the eyes of the church. ... Only the church alone never refuses him; only the church accepts him as he is, without classification, whether fortunate or misfortunate, capable or incapable, strong or tired, rich or poor, happy or unhappy, good or bad. The church receives him always in its mercy and the patience of its ministers. The church evaluates him always as a man rather than as an instrument and draws even nearer to him in his degradation.⁶⁸

Valuing the individual in a similar fashion, Ponti talked to everyone in the same way. He was unable to adjust his manner of speech which led to a criticism that said he used to seduce those in 'power', like the artists of old. Having established a commission, a special relationship arose between him and his clients. Ponti worked from his set of ideas that the client had to accept, which meant that Ponti did not listen to his clients in order to design a complete unity of space. At the end of his life, however, Ponti, became more compromising in his own domestic sphere, according his daughter, Lisa Ponti. She described her feeling for living in a "Pontian" dwelling:

We grew up in beautiful houses entirely designed by him. We lived in them in the Ponti style - in rooms without doors, amidst his pictures and books - in total enchantment. And only his Giulia [Ponti's second daughter] broke down the beautiful design with the beautiful disorder. She glued family photographs on the walls, ignoring his 'organized panels'. She introduced odd plates into Ponti's perfect table settings. She used to sleep in the daytime as well, during the hours when everyone else was full of zeal. She never turned on any of the 'self-illuminating' pieces of furniture, so that the shadows grew in the evening, allowing her to think. In the last months of his life Gio Ponti imitated her.⁶⁹

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⁶⁸ Ponti, G. (1960) 'Architecture, religion' in *In Praise of Architecture* op. cit. p. 254 - 255.

⁶⁹ Ponti, L. (1990) *ibid.* p. 22.

This kind of contradiction between a total acceptance of an arranged home and a yearning for freedom from design within his own family, exemplified Ponti's predicament for an individual expression and individuality. It communicated lasting expressions of personal history gathered in the home within the notions of 'collezionismo', of national identity, and genuine talents. The home became a symbol of faith where beauty and innocence prevailed in its unity and complexity. As an expression made for a family by an individual, the interior of the present consisted in a play with the imagination, effects of forms, colours and materials. Here the architect himself, Ponti, created an ideal living space, dictated the representation of taste and was the producer of the aesthetic quality. Every detail (objects, forms, colours, etc.) had its place in the total setting. The established role of the wife as a decorator and the one who arranged things in the domestic environment, like Penny Sparke argued in her book *As Long as It's Pink*, was left out in the Pontian setting.⁷⁰ Instead she fulfilled an ideal spiritual function for her family. According to Lisa Ponti, the space was not to be altered by any of the family members.

Texts following the images of houses and interiors in *Domus* emphasised new materials, colour compositions, treatment of materials and new techniques. As an interior made by an artist, it was a piece of art. The visual and intellectual experience of the reader, and the one who actually visited the flats, would be to uncover little secrets, like isolated rooms and reserved patios. It would be a participation in a play, like the one of a labyrinth, a complex play of discovering the concealed. The reader was active in this drama by his perception of diversity and the constant change which was inherent in the history that surrounded man, the inhabitant's 'civiltà'. From the perspective of the architect, it was a matter of being perceptive and receptive to the lasting new. The home was represented as an individual expression - arranged by the architect or in collaboration with the inhabitant. The settings conveyed the various modes of living, subject to personal history, the wish to express one's social status or modernity. This meant that despite being aware of the American portrayal of good life, the Italian bourgeois still presented his 'italianità' by depicting an idea of history which was inherent in his own way of life and the objects around him. Thus the evolution of 'time' was an important concept both in the urban life and as part of man's condition.

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⁷⁰ Sparke, P. (1995) *As Long as It's Pink. The sexual politics of taste*. Pandora, London, p. 180.

2.4

The myth of the house

2.4.1

Experiencing the ritual in the house is set against the overt consumerist society

During the period of 1950 to 1963 the Italian economy grew at a faster rate than it had ever previously achieved. The growth-rate was such, particularly in the years 1958 to 1963, that this phase became known as the 'economic miracle'.⁷¹ By the 1960s Italy, or at least Northern Italy, had become a modern industrial country, with a GNP per head of almost \$1,500.⁷² Industry was no longer restricted to car production and large machinery. Manufacturers co-operated with designers (the Castiglioni's work for Zanotta, Carlo Scarpa for Gavina, Marco Zanuso for Pirelli's Arflex, Sottsass for Olivetti, Gino Columbini for Kartell, Gino Valli for Zanussi) and industry thereby extended its field to the home of the client, to the whole house, objects and furniture and finally, it recognised a new need for technological devices which made the operation of the house easier. Industrial design was hence considered part of the consumer culture. Ironically some basic goods (such as meat) were becoming relatively more expensive than non-basic goods (such as television sets). An average Italian had a diet which was poorer than that of most

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⁷¹ Sassoon, D (1986) *Contemporary Italy, Politics, Economy and Society since 1945*. Longman, London and New York, p. 28.

⁷² Clarke, M. (1995) op. cit., p. 349.

workers in other European countries but had the same sort of household goods: cars, transistor radios, vacuum cleaners, Brionvega television sets, Zanussi's refrigerators and cookers, Candy washing machines as well as Kartell's plastic kitchen accessories etc. Within this framework, domestic comfort was not only measured in upholstery but even more in terms of the machine and ease of work. These elements represented a total image that symbolised a new existence for the Italian working class. In their new motorcars, 90% of which were produced by Fiat by the beginning of the sixties, Milanese workers could drive to the lakes or mountains for the weekend, and the family seaside holiday became common in the 1960's.⁷³ By then most prosperous families had a second home in the countryside, and many ex-peasant families had settled in the towns. However, as Paul Ginsborg pointed out in his book, *A History of Contemporary Italy, society and politics 1943 - 1988*, the 'economic miracle' did not reach the whole sector of society. He argued that

... in the absence of planning, of civic education, of elementary public services, the individual family, particularly of the *ceti medi*, sought salvation in private spending and consumption: on using a car to go to work, on private medicine and on private nursery schools in the absence of state ones. The 'miracle' was thus an exquisitely private affair, which reinforced the historic tendency of each Italian family to fend for itself as best it could.⁷⁴ [Ginsborg's italics]

The social dynamic of the 'economic miracle' worked to increase the atomisation of Italian civil society. The role of the individual nuclear family became even more important than previously. The new urban structure served to isolate families, which were decreasing in size, in small but comfortable living-quarters, and provided few spaces for collective gatherings or community life. Women became the principal target of the new consumerism, and the increased emphasis on their service role within the home intensified their isolation. Cars and television further encouraged an essentially privatised and familial use of leisure time. The 'economic miracle', by linking rising living standards with accentuated individualism, seemed to come closer to fulfil the American dream. It had introduced a new model of social integration to Italy. It seemed, as Ginsborg has pointed out, that as church attendance dramatically decreased, the American model of consumer society revealed itself as the Trojan horse within the citadel of Catholic values.⁷⁵ Similarly, as the younger generation had little time for the traditional collective pastimes and activities of the *Casa del Popolo*, the Communists blamed television,

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⁷³ Burney, J. (1994) *Design heroes: Ettore Sottsass*. Harper Collins Publisher London p. 82.

⁷⁴ Ginsborg, P. (1990) *A History of Contemporary Italy, society and politics 1943 - 1988*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, p. 240.

⁷⁵ Ginsborg, P. (1990) *ibid.* p. 248.

consumerism and home-based living for the new isolationist trends. This was felt as early as 1954 in *La Strada* by Fellini which expressed a lament for the vanishing world of strong men and sword-swallowers, of country fairs and urban festivals. The 1961 census found 1,678 professional singers, less than half the number of 1911. There was a similar decline among violinists, painters, sculptors, clowns and ballad-singers ('cantastorie').⁷⁶ The popular sports remained the same - football, cycling, and motor racing. The main change was that sport became a consumer good rather than something to participate in, a patriotic duty. Football, for example, was said to be the Italians' favourite sport, but few of them actually played it. They watched it, or rather they watched the official Football League games on Sunday afternoons. They were passive consumers, whose only role was to pay and to applaud.⁷⁷ It was Pasolini, at a later date, who provided the strongest image of an Italy that was changing for ever, an Italy where the old values, dialects and traditions were being destroyed. He made a parallel with fireflies which, wrote Pasolini, had disappeared:

In the early 60s, with the pollution of the air, and above all in the countryside with the pollution of the water (the blue streams and the transparent sunbeams), the fireflies began to disappear. The phenomenon was as rapid as lightning. After a few years they were not there any more. ...⁷⁸

Within this economic situation, the presentation of objects and the definitions of 'collezionismo' in *Domus*, during Ponti's editorship, was extremely elitist. The introduction of the new was as much about imposition as of profound mutations. Collecting from one's travels was still seen in *Domus* as a measure of the cultural dimension of the inhabitant and the home of the bourgeois family continued to be a home of a 'collezionista' during this so-called 'economic miracle'. The furnishing of the interior setting showed a taste for modernity and visually pleasing forms which in its composition of colours and forms played on the concept of fantasy. Responding to the increasing mobility around the world, Bruno Munari offered a playful game for a 'scultura da viaggio', published in *Domus* in 1959.⁷⁹ There were folding and light sculptures of which the smaller ones could easily be put into luggage and brought along when leaving. [fig. 34] In contrast to the anonymous hotel, the sculpture would be a worldly reference of a particular culture. Its geometrical shapes were reminiscent of how a piece of paper transformed, in one instance, from two-dimensionality to a flexible form of three-dimensions. There was no constancy, only a continuous play of appearances and discoveries of different

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⁷⁶ Clarke, M. (1995) op. cit. p. 369.

⁷⁷ Clarke, M. (1995) op. cit., pp. 369 -370.

⁷⁸ Pasolini, P.P. (1992) '1 febbraio 1975, L'articolo della lucciole' in *Scritti Corsari*. Garzanti, Milano, p. 127.

⁷⁹ Munari, B. 'Le "sculture da viaggio"' in *Domus* n. 359, 1959, p. 37 - 38.

dimensions - which was precisely the intriguing part of travelling. Bearing this in mind, *Domus* was clearly the spokesman for the dominant bourgeois class. It could, therefore, be argued that this 'world' was artificial and synthetic but saying that, *Domus* did not pretend to appeal to any other social group. The bourgeois had always clearly been its client. Communicating only with a small slice of society, the magazine was not a mirror of reality, but set out to project the ideal, a world that did not exist. It was in some respects the complete opposite of the world as experienced but was nonetheless composed of elements from the existing world. Ponti did not, however, dictate one line of thought represented in *Domus*, he encouraged the magazine to be a battlefield of ideas. It was therefore not inappropriate when an acute critique of the consumerist society appeared through the '*Domus* Diary' of Ettore Sottsass where he communicated his experience during his journey to India. The simple and non-consumerist way of living impressed him greatly and in many ways changed his conceptions for design. He remembers:

The symbols of the houses of Agra are without a doubt a thousand years old and their meaning is always in danger of crystallization; but the surprising thing, the thing which every time fills me with wonder and enchantment, is the discovery that these thousand-years-old symbols are capable of regeneration, like the Arabian Phoenix. The thing which every time fills me with wonder and enchantment is that when these primitive symbols, these primitive psychic or intellectual solutions become regenerated they still fill people with serenity and smilingness and the balm of escape.⁸⁰

There was no apparent difference between the spiritual and the material. The few objects that an Indian family possessed were part of a ritual. There was a great awareness of objects, that made a small bronze bowl immensely important in the environment. It became an instrument for thought, for meditation, for signifying that someone was a leading person in society. Because of this importance, craftsmen crafted these objects with great care, so that they would become beautiful, vibrating with mystery and magic. The objects' makers and users were very conscious of what an object signified, both functionally and symbolically.⁸¹ Gillo Dorfles had also pointed out the magical and ritual role of the object in his article '*Oggetti e ornamenti magici*' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 213, 1946. He took examples from India, Greece, Japan and South America and argued that many of our modern urban artefacts derived from the magic objects of these places. To a great extent modern artefacts conserved the awareness of magic characteristics that were inherent in ornamentation. According to Sottsass, objects were not just tools

⁸⁰ Sottsass, E. jr. 'Viaggio a Oriente, quarta puntata: Agra e le pitture sulle case' in *Domus* n. 410, 1964, pp. 40 - 44.

⁸¹ Sottsass, E. in Burney, J. (1994) *Design heroes: Ettore Sottsass*, p. 95-96.

Le "sculture da viaggio", di Munari

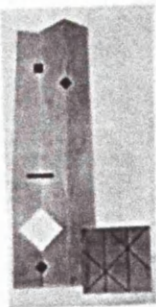
Munari ha ideato queste "sculture da viaggio" e vuole egli le chiama: "sculture a pieghevole" e leggere, le più piccole, da mettere in valigia e portare con sé, quando si parte; perché così, ad ogni ritorno, nella nostra stanza d'albergo, come un punto di riferimento nel mondo della propria cultura.

Alcune Munari le ha realizzate in legno di pino, con incisioni in rilievo (in alcuni casi scolpite e levigate); altre in metallo, altre in materia plastica.

Una piccola scultura pieghevole di cartoncino rosso e verde, in troncato congegnato e fuso. Munari l'ha inviata in omaggio ai suoi amici nelle varie parti del mondo, per via aerea.

Munari era sta preparando due grandi sculture pieghevoli, una in alluminio lucido, alta tre metri, ed alta la base nera, larga quattro metri, per un giardino in Italia.

In settembre si è aperta a New York una grande mostra personale di Munari.



Sculture pieghevoli in legno di pino, alte 15 cm., larghezza da 10 cm. a 15 cm. (alcune in metallo e plastica); nella fotografia a fianco, un mobile in legno quadrato, di legno scuro, con una scultura in metallo.

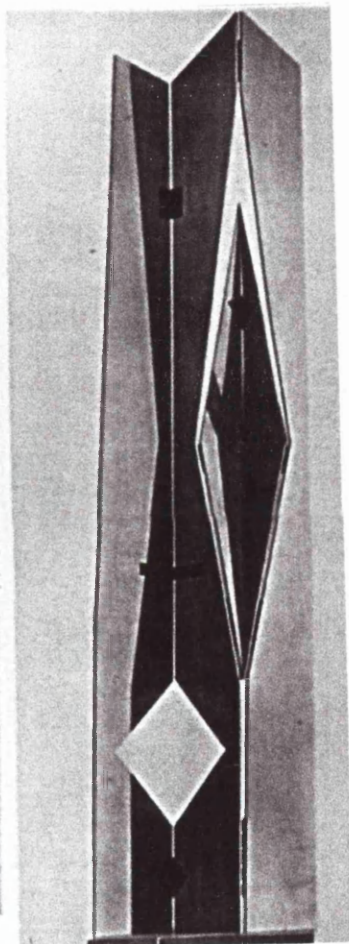


Fig. 34.- "Le "sculture da viaggio" Domus n. 359 (1959).
From the illustration in *Domus*, these sculptures seem to incorporate a spiritual power of an idol that invites the beholder to console in it. In that way the sculpture is a travelling companion that inspires the imagination.

for doing things with so that we could get what needed doing done as quickly as possible. They were much more than that. They were instruments for living our lives with. They certainly helped to do things in a certain fashion and, in fact, they helped you approach the whole enterprise in a particular way. They helped to set the entire scene, and explained what you were doing as you did it. They became fellow travellers, diagrams for helping you live your life, they opened up possibilities and then let you get involved. They actually made you go faster, or slower, talk more or talk less, they might make you close your eyes or open them wide, perhaps they just emanated charm or provoked thoughts or even appealed to the senses. In the final analysis what they did was that they prompted a better awareness of what life was about.⁸² Against the ever greater need to consume and acquire things, Sottsass urged for a greater consciousness about the value of each individual object as an element of one's life and a ritual. His thoughts were greatly influenced by mysticism which endeavoured to call back memories and soothe tensions dictated by the social structure. It tried to eliminate social pressures and remove logic whilst it encouraged people to pay attention to the fortuity of events and to remember moods.⁸³ His project for a house by the sea in 1962 and published in *Domus*, represented a collection of his ideas about the ritual of being.⁸⁴ The structure of the house was in itself, very simple and elementary, and was secondary to the atmosphere, light and colours. The atmosphere involved that of creating a static space (in the sense that everything was visible), protected by walls and trees and where dimensions and materials were arranged and restrained. The relationship between exterior and interior was enforced by sliding doors which one could manipulate as desired. But when the doors were open there was a total continuity only interrupted by glass. In this pure way, the exterior was reduced to a mere image. [fig. 35] The doors were coloured tinplates. Their design was not a structural one but they were signs, coloured signs that could move. Moving, the signs changed the composition of the exterior facade, which meant that the house was never the same colour. The colour was thought for the people who lived in the house, or in the garden, for those who passed by crossing the sea, and for those viewing from the black cliffs who understood a colourful house as a symbol of human presence. The kitchen opened to the outside like all the other rooms. Eating outside was possible for many months of the year, and inside the kitchen the working area was practically outside, in the shade but in the open. The internal courtyards, gardens and terraces were arranged in such a way that the inhabitants of the house conceived their daily deeds as rituals. There was a fireplace underneath the pergola for cooking the fish in front of the sea. There was a basin with a little still water for the plants and a sacred vegetable garden, fenced, where only trees and mushrooms grew. It had no purpose other than to exist. This

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⁸² Sottsass, E. 'Sergio Asti' in *Ottagono* n. 101, 1991, p. 8-9.

⁸³ Sottsass, E. from 'Ettore Sottsass' written by Dreyfuss, S. in *Ottagono* n. 101, 1991, p. 154.

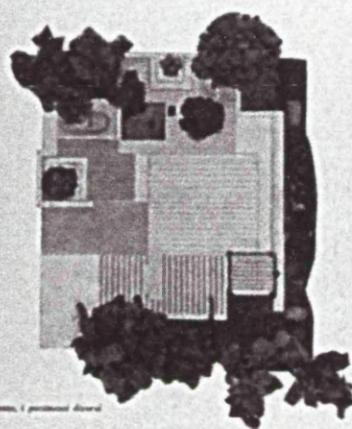
⁸⁴ Sottsass, E. 'Appunti per il progetto di una casa al mare' in *Domus* n. 386, 1962, pp. 11 -18.

project was about the myth of the house, how small elements and actions were transformed in value when the user/viewer contemplated their existence. The most simple things became indispensable for enriching the presence of the other and yet would pass unnoticed most of the time. The dialogue of rituals was thus created by Sottsass of the exterior view of this house by the sea. The house of the bourgeois was not conceived as a showroom of famous designers but a place of meditation.

Despite using similar rhetoric in 1959 for an interior design, Sottsass was still able to show that label-naming designers and the projection of the dwelling as a piece of art remained sternly a *Domus* criteria.⁸⁵ In Sottsass's case, however, the focus of attention shifted. From being structural and three-dimensional, the flat was thought essentially as a graphic and colour composition. To a certain extent, its composition appeared like Arabic carpets and mats shown in succession. Alternatively, it also recalled certain trends of contemporary painting which considered the picture as a succession of different zones of materials and colours, strictly attached to two-dimensional surface. In this kind of play around surfaces, one had to increase the number of materials which were represented by different woods, varnished areas and glass, etc. Textures, materials and surfaces were the prime elements of experiencing this space visually. Spaces and furniture that could contain objects and books were limited. The environment was highly controlled and disciplined where each corner offered the eye a new focal point. This special effect was created mainly by the wall composition, by using interchanging qualities of ceramics, wood, art works or furniture that were set against the walls (like the square box of the television, or pots for plants). The result was having obtained a space from varied sources - the magic of oriental decoration and discipline of modern abstract painting. The reading of the inhabitants' history through 'collezionismo' ended in irony. Sottsass criticised the overtly consumerist society by giving meaning to the sensitivity of the individual, the interior expressed a personal and subjective experience. Thereby Sottsass made a statement identifying the house with a myth, the ritual of being.

Although not a prevalent way of looking at the home, there were reviews in *Domus* that reflected on the spirit of the house rather than its material content. This was particularly evident in houses in the mountains, the second residence of the bourgeois. The house itself became the main focus, showing photographs of its relationship with nature and the play of materials. The interior which in theory should show the level of social status and personal history was projected as secondary. Generally the house in the mountains had fewer objects than the one in the city. It was now not only a matter of collecting 'name tags' inside one's home, but the actual house became part of the same concept, 'collezionismo'. Individual architects built up the artefacts

⁸⁵ Sottsass, E. 'In un arredamento, composizione di pareti' in *Domus* n. 358, 1959, pp. 13 - 18.



Appunti per il progetto di una casa al mare

Enrico Battaglia Jr., arch.

Questo progetto rappresenta una specie di collezione di idee che potrebbero essere sviluppate in una seconda stesura.

Il tema principale è quello che la questa casa non contenga tutti le strutture... essenzialmente squamati e primitivi... questo l'atmosfera, la luce e soprattutto il volume. L'atmosfera, nel senso che tutta la stanza è rivolta a creare spazi aperti, liberi da muri e da soffitti, o comunque ordinati e controllati nelle dimensioni e nelle strutture (mobili, tavole, divani, sedili, ecc.) che tutto quello che c'è è visibile e non ci sono intoppi, più o meno sottili o evidenti e non sono.

I problemi del rapporto tra l'interno e l'esterno si risolvono con le grandi porte scorrevoli, per cui questo rapporto può essere molto facile come si vuole: sia quando le porte sono aperte la continuità è totale, comunque l'entrata dei vetri, l'entrata anche a perfino e di ridurre l'entrata a sole ininterrotta.

La parte verso di sinistra, esposta a sud-ovest. Il loro disegno non è un disegno strutturale ma è il disegno di un oggetto e un oggetto realizzato che si muove. Movimento, questo segno, trasforma le componenti di cui, dalle facciate esterne, per cui la casa, in fondo, non è mai dello stesso volume. Così il volume è fatto per la parte che abita la casa e i giardini, ed è fatto anche per la parte che passa nel mare, e per la parte, nel resto degli, una casa colorata è un simbolo di presenza umana. La casa si apre nell'esterno come tutte le altre stanze: in pratica per molti anni all'anno si può far da mangiare all'aperto, e dentro alla cucina anche la stanza da lavoro, praticamento è all'aperto: all'entrata non all'aperto.

I cortili, i giardini e le terrazze interne, sono disposti in modo... una porta e chiusure e muri e alberi... da spiegare che abita la casa verso l'idea dei posti quotidiani come cibo. C'è un tavolo e per mangiare di poco di fronte al mare e, sotto la pergola. C'è una vasca con poca acqua intorno per i fiori, o c'è un letto nero, cioè un tavolo bianco e grigio, dove ci sono sedili alti e lunghi non sono mai.

The exterior and interior fuse into one continuous space. This allowed the inhabitant to determine the setting and its function by using sliding doors. The image of the house was about a way of life, life that took shape as it was 'lived'.

of man's environment and he became surrounded by works of art. The predominant assumption was that no two individuals were the same, neither their wishes nor experiences of life. The bourgeois had the means to demand a choice and to be able to select - and who could afford freedom of expression. To satisfy the client, the ideal architect would amalgamate imagination and technology in order to arrive at a unique result. In this sense, *Domus* embraced the technological and formal invention in the works by, for example Mangiarotti, Morassutti, Valle and Zanuso, the expressive designs of architects such as Enrico Castiglioni and the fantastic structuralism of designers such as Felix Candela. The house in the mountains at San Martino in Castrozza, by the architects Angelo Mangiarotti and Bruno Morassutti in 1959, exemplified in many ways the idea for this kind of a house.⁸⁶ [fig. 36] It had a clear structure and layout arrived at by simple means. Employing traditional materials with an existing language, it asserted itself in the Alpine landscape without falling into any sense of the folkloric. The composition of the facade, made of rough and refined materials of rocks and natural and varnished wood, was set against the same qualities of the surrounding nature. These materials were again smoothly inserted into the interior of the house, by means of the big glass window of the living room and hence entered a play with the bright colours of the dividing walls and furniture. Once inside the house, the visual confrontation was met with a controlled composition of textures, as objects were few and remained unidentified and unrecognised - almost passing the magazine's reader unnoticed. The same methodology was used in describing a house by Ignazio Gardella and Anna Castelli Ferrieri in 1962, where attention was drawn to how the house, by means of its forms and colour composition, emerged from nature and gave a marvellous panoramic view of the sea.⁸⁷ Again there was no reference or identification to the furnishing and objects. They were part of the layout without drawing attention to themselves.

The 'economic miracle' had certainly opened up great opportunities for people to make life easier and faster in terms of consumer goods and in the operation of the house, a way of life that had been reflected upon in *Domus*. Yet there still remained a niche in the magazine for architects who precisely criticised that consumer society. Architects who wanted to enrich the dwelling for the inhabitant and to create a lyrical setting that not only contained his objects but fused the inside and outside, and obscured the meeting points of flat planes and those spaces of three dimensions. The architect made the house part of experiencing the house, its limits and openings by which it became a place of

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⁸⁶ Mangiarotti, A. and Morassutti, B. 'Una casa in montagna a San Martino di Castrozza' in *Domus* n. 353, 1959, pp.11-22.

⁸⁷ Gardella, I. and Castelli, A. 'Villa nella pineta di Arenzano' in *Domus* n. 392, 1962, p. 15 - 26.

contemplation. Every element had a value and a meaning which was identified by taking part in a dialogue of rituals.

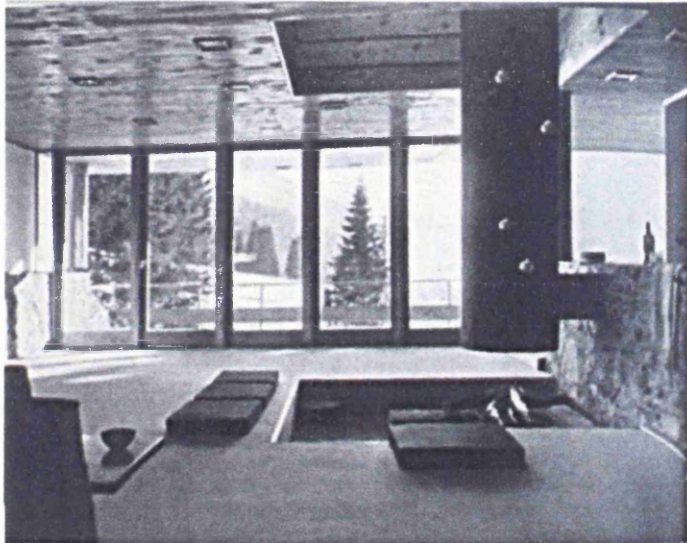
2.4.2

The power of the author creates a setting for 'good design'

By publishing the work of its chosen designers, *Domus* attempted to give an impression of Italy's economic growth and to offer technical information and an aesthetic standard for major architectural works. The product had become more than just a way of satisfying an individual or social need. The 'object' within the domestic setting contained the symbolic function of conveying an identity to the world and establishing a link of belonging to a class. The most effective way to stimulate the desire for commodities was to suggest that they were the key to a clean, harmonious and comfortable way of life.⁸⁸ *Domus* was part of this promotion of consumerism, yet without encouraging obsolescence. Now the euphoria of the time of economic growth was mirrored in the mass production and distribution of consumer goods to which the magazine was careful to draw limits. 'Collezionismo' had initiated an attitude that perceived the furnishing of the home as works of art rather than something that would soon become out of date. The aesthetic development was only derivative from a cultural context and an unavoidable artistic sensitivity. This is, however, not to say that obsolescence was not part of the debate within the design circle. Its impact and ideological focus was highly discussed in relation to its international appeal and presented in *Stile Industria* during these years. Dealing with the production of objects, their functional and symbolic value, the magazine took the opposite pole to *Domus* and promoted objects which were produced out of necessity. In 1963 - 1964 the availability of objects had reached abundance. In the late 1950's, the English *Independent Group* had discussed the notion of obsolescence and abundance. The question about the impact of these terms led to the questioning of tradition and history, of becoming nostalgic about the object. One made history, in other words, by building up values, whether one reacted in their favour or against. Having obsolescence as a point of reference, one did not have time to digest the object and make it important. There was always another object which was arriving on the market and going to be better. The object became old-fashioned very early on in its life and was hardly worth remembering as there were so many that had had the same fate. Asserting that point of view, the object needed to be allocated an appropriate place in its appropriate context. This was a problem for industrial design. Its methodology

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⁸⁸ For further reading on the subject of 'how design represents to us the ideas and beliefs through which we assimilate and adjust to the material facts of everyday life' see Adrian Forty's book *Objects of Desire. Design and society since 1750*. Thames & Hudson, London, 1986.



Il messaggio, nelle tre sedi a cui sono le conferenze, vuole essere sempre quello, nel momento in cui si parla di politica, di far capire che la politica non è un'attività separata, ma che essa dipende dalle attività quotidiane, quelle che noi tutti facciamo, e che la politica non è un'attività separata, ma che essa dipende dalle attività quotidiane, quelle che noi tutti facciamo, e che la politica non è un'attività separata, ma che essa dipende dalle attività quotidiane, quelle che noi tutti facciamo.

Fig. 36.- 'Una casa in montagna a San Martino di Castrozza' *Domus* n. 353 (1959).
This setting recalls the tranquillity of a Japanese house where a great care is taken in the finish of materials and creation of volumes that take on, as it seems, a physical substance. It is a place of meditation, where man finds himself in the midst between the spirit and substance.

created a new set of values that were due to affect the whole life of the citizen; inside the home, the means of transportation, and in the outlook of the city. Rosselli in *Stile Industria*, was looking for an industrial methodology that had a solid ideological base. A method which would produce beautiful products from need rather than formalistic ones subject to obsolescence or whimsical desires. Responding to this way of thinking, *Stile Industria* n. 21 in 1959, opened up a debate about the teaching of industrial design under the title 'Discussione sull'insegnamento del disegno industriale'. Participant were well-known designers and critics; Bruno Alfieri, Reyner Banham, Misha Black, Gillo Dorfles, Ettore Sottsass jr., and Marco Zanuso. They addressed the question of education and the formation of the designer which would link the designer to the field of industry and related the distinction between designing and styling to technology on the Italian scene. The American notion of styling was referred to as part of good or bad taste but the artist and member of the *Independent Group*, Richard Hamilton came close to its essence by insisting on its economic value to the business man. He said in 1960:

... it is just this coming-to-terms with a mass society that has been the aim and the achievement of industrial design, in America. The task of orientation towards a mass society required a rethink of what was, so convincingly, an ideal formula. Function is a rational yardstick, and when it was realized in the twenties that all designed objects could be measured by it, everyone felt not only artistic but right and good. The trouble is that consumer goods function in many ways; looked at from the point of view of the business man, design has one function - to increase sales. If a design for industry does not sell in the quantities for which it was designed to be manufactured then it is not functioning properly.

The element in the American attitude to production that worries the European most is the cheerful acceptance of obsolescence; American society is committed to a rapid quest for mass, mechanized luxury because this way of life satisfies the need of the American industrial economy. By the early fifties it had become clear in America that production was no problem. The difficulty lay in consuming at the rate which suited production, and this rate is not high - it must accelerate. The philosophy of obsolescence, involving as it does the creation of short-term solutions, designs that do not last, has had its drawbacks for the designer - the moralities of the craftsman just do not fit when the product's greatest virtue is impermanence.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Hamilton, R. 'Persuading Image' in Leffington, E. (ed.) (1988) *Modern Dreams. The Rise and Fall and rise of Pop*. The Institute for Contemporary Art. The Clocktower Gallery. New York. The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, London England, pp.58-59.

The market was made by the virtue of the object in other words. Design had to play an increasing part in sales promotion as the responsibility of the designer lay in marketing and satisfying a mass audience. This was more important than his estimation of the intrinsic value of the product itself. The American designer George Nelson, in his book *Problems of Design*, believed obsolescence to be a useful tool for raising living standards and stated the case effectively (to which Hamilton was well aware). He argued that:

... obsolescence as a process is wealth-producing, not wasteful. It leads to constant renewal of the industrial establishment at higher levels, and it provides a way of getting a maximum of goods to a maximum of people. ...What we need is more obsolescence, not less.⁹⁰

This view was radically different from the one that Americans generally found in Italy in 1947. Marshall McLuhan, writing on American advertising, noted that an American officer in Italy, who was also the correspondent for *Printer's Ink*, was rather perturbed by what he found there. He stated:

... the Italians can tell you the names of the ministers in the government but not the names of the favourite products of the celebrities of their country. In addition, the walls of the Italian cities are plastered more with political slogans than with commercial ones. According to the opinion of this officer there is little hope that the Italians will achieve a state of prosperity and internal calm until they start to be more interested in the respective merits of different types of cornflakes and cigarettes rather than the relative abilities of their political leaders.⁹¹

By the sixties, the world of *Domus* had advocated a change to this image, towards a more pro-American type of a citizen. Now *Domus's* readers, after being educated about good taste, could name their favourite authors, and who were renowned for the quality of their work. The magazine published articles and built itself upon recognised talents and newly discovered talents - from Scarpa to Kahn and Hollein, from Derch to Stirling and Isozaki, from Zvi Hecker to Piano, from Moretti to Van Eyck, Magistretti, Mangiarotti, and Enrico Castiglioni - to rediscovered talents - such as Schindler, Chareau and Eileen Gray. The same was true for design, from Enzo Mari to Joe Colombo and from Alviani to the Archizoom. Some of the names became classics, or *Domus's* favourites, and were part of people's existence within their homes and the house itself; names, such as, Gio Ponti himself, Ettore Sottsass,

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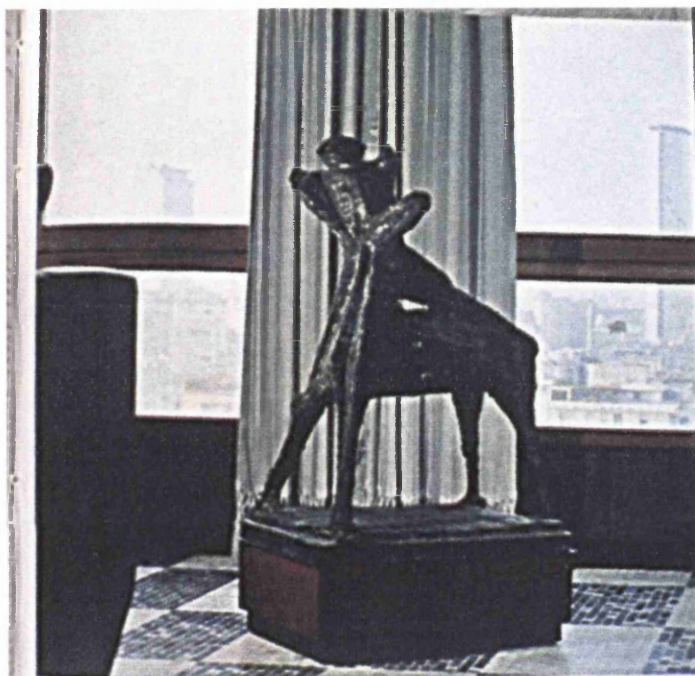
⁹⁰ Nelson G. "Obsolescence" in *Problems of Design*. Whitney Library of Design, New York, 1979, p. 50. First published in 1957.

⁹¹ This is cited from Ginsborg, P. (1990) op. cit. p. 247 - 248.

Charles Eames, Isamu Noguchi and art works by Marini, Sironi and Fontana. This could be seen in a flat on the eighteenth floor in Milan arranged by the architects, Franco Albini and Franca Helg in 1964 where an idea of order and tranquillity characterised the atmosphere.⁹² [fig. 37] There was no text that supported the illustrations other than a few captions that described the setting. The flat was huge with big open spaces. The furniture was both modern and old, though the pictures on the walls and free standing sculptures were mainly modern. This understanding of a dialogue between the past and modernity was balanced by the use of colours and patterns of the tiles on the floors, which varied according to rooms and provided a feeling of tradition and craftsmanship. The flat featured design and art works by Marino Marini, Sironi and Lucio Fontana, Charles Eames, Marco Zanuso and Franco Albini and Franca Helg which fitted into the perfect composition between form and space. This tranquillity and equilibrium between elements expressed full comfort and good taste. The interior design consisted of familiar features that had repeatedly appeared in *Domus*. The concept of the 'avant-garde' had not yet entered people's domestic landscape but the magazine maintained its interest in artistic trends from both sides of the Atlantic and included the Americans Jackson Pollock, Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, and the Europeans Yves Klein, Christo, and César in its introduction of the new as well as reviewing the American Pop Art arriving at the Venice Biennale in 1964. The magazine seemed to have renewed its European artistic interest with articles on specific architects ranging from Scandinavia (Alvar Aalto and Ralph Erskine) to Spain (Coderch and Correa). Simultaneously, *Domus* published articles on new American artists and Gillo Dorfles's reading of the 'contemporaneity of the baroque', as well as including a series of essays by the French critic Pierre Restany, on the reality of art and the problems of international cultural life that involved criticism, the market, museography, anthropology, theatre and the entertainment business. In this way *Domus* published a flow of new ideas that appeared in the sixties from artists who were working on breaking up the established way of seeing things. This emphasised the predominance of individual expression and democracy - everything became valid as an expression made by an individual and free mind. But this freedom of expression and choice followed its own course that affected the expression of the family, namely, it widened the space between the bourgeois and the lower classes. Objects by 'first rank' designers were sought after, bought and displayed at home for their symbolic value rather than need. In that way, the abundance of objects not only indicated a families' social status and moral standards but also explicit social divisions. The regular reader of *Domus* could follow the most recent productions and preoccupations of the time. Attentive of promoting ideas of modernity, the magazine expressed convictions of the home being a centre where the family lived in a

⁹² 'A Milano, al diciottesimo piano' nella casa di un collezionista, opere antiche e moderne ambientate da Franco Albini e Franca Helg, architetti' in *Domus* n. 421, 1964, pp. 25-33.

setting arranged with a thought behind it. A thought that including notions of history, the arts and 'civiltà', comfort and technology. As such the home was a complex setting of diverse expressions. While Ponti promoted the idea of being open to international markets, the home was also where one's cultural and artistic tradition was nurtured. Objects and furniture identified the various nationalities and characteristics as well as paying particular attention to Italian qualities within the artefact. This conscious amalgamation was one of the peculiarities of the modern Italian home. Celebrating diversity, playing of opposites and different experiences, the harmony within the home lay in the composition of objects, forms, colours and materials that had different characteristics just as the individuals' compositions derived from different histories. The house had a life, a subjective meaning which meant that although priorities changed in terms of old and new furniture, it always maintained its symbolic value of its owner, of particular taste, status and way of life.



Umberto Boccioni, *Forme uniche e linee multiple*, 1911.

nella casa di un collezionista,
opere antiche e moderne
realizzate da Franco Albini e Franco Helg, architetti

A Milano, al diciottesimo piano

di Franco Albini e Franco Helg

Fig. 37.-'A Milano, al diciottesimo piano' *Domus* n. 421 (1964).

The photographic image that opens up this article shows Marini's sculpture against the window where the reader can see two skyscrapers that cut the skyline - one of which is the Picelli tower, a symbol of modernity. The reader is from that moment consciously drawn into a setting of multiple expressions; the arts, crafts (in the tiles of the floor), and modernity which lead to further discoveries.

Part 3

The 'object', a symbol of human existence

3.1

'Modernità' investigated within the fusion of arts, crafts and industry

As is clear from Part 1 and Part 2, the idea of modernity was one of the prime issues in the immediate post-war years, particularly as to how to relate it morally to the devastation left by the war. Its complexity had already been debated in the inter-war years among architects and critics, such as Edoardo Persico, Gio Ponti, Ernesto N. Rogers, Elio Vittorini and Giuseppe Bottai, writers published in the magazines, *Casa Bella*, *Domus*, *Quadrante*, *L'Ambrosiano*, and *Stile*. How should one approach the object as an artefact created by the architect that would belong to both the private and public sphere? How could an artefact, for example, express notions of nationality and not deviate from European taste? These questions were carried on into the post-war period in magazines, conferences and exhibitions in Milan, and placed within the vigorous debate about design around 1954 which focused on in what way a fusion of arts, crafts and industry could be part of modernity and a national identity. Although 'Italian' design represented the country at exhibitions in Europe and America, scepticism was raised concerning the validity of the presumption, 'typically Italian'. In *Domus*, Gio Ponti questioned whether one could attribute Italian characteristics to all design in Italy and came to the conclusion that the uniqueness of Italian production derived from the artistic tradition and came to the surface by means of intuition. This he articulated in the article, 'L'interesse americano per l'Italia' (1954):

[Our movements are not academic;] we never know what is going to happen, ... or what any of us are going to make tomorrow. An "Italian" art in history does not exist, what exists

is a quality of how Italians make art; this is the only Italian tradition recognisable between diverse expressions of past Italian art. It is only the abundance and "Italian" continuity of different masterpieces and of men having a unique temperament that constitutes "the Italian art".

Also today [in regards to] those who speak overseas about "the Italian line," this Italian line is not there; but there are "the Italians" who, by their simultaneous diversity, constitute this Italian phenomenon.

There does not exist this persistent regularity and unity of taste which identifies the productions from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, or France. There does not exist a Italian taste, nor a formal Italian standard; "the Italians" exist.¹ [Ponti's inverted commas]

Design was a personal expression and a method of communication. An object revealed characteristics drawn from the Italian condition and tradition and, simultaneously, exposed a modernity and an innovative design that was accessible to a universal audience. This was an individual expression on the part of the Italian architect that did not fall into a national mould, style, or taste, in contrast to, for instance, America being famous for its industrial design, Sweden for its light wood and easily combined furniture, Finland for its glass and Japan for its paper designs. In one sense, the object was telling a narrative, an autobiographical narrative of the author, about his more collective experience and his relationship with life. Speculating on this question in the introduction to the book, *Italy Builds, l'Italia costruisce. Its Modern Architecture and native inheritance* (1954) by G.E. Kidder Smith, Ernesto Rogers reasoned for the validity of an unequivocal definition for 'Italian' architecture. He raised the question in regards to architecture but knowing his conceptions for both his (BBPR's) buildings and furniture, the same questions applied to the single artefact. He asked;

'Has a kind of architecture ever existed which might be called typically Italian?'

¹ Ponti, G. 'L'interesse americano per l'Italia' in *Domus* n. 292, 1954, p. 56.

As evidence of this 'inherent' Italianess, his daughter, Lisa Ponti, remembers Ponti telling a story about a villa that he had built in Venezuela, using 'modern forms'. Without knowing anything about the building people nicknamed it the 'Fiorentina'. With this story Ponti wanted to stress that history is inherent in man, that 'Italianità' springs forth unconsciously. It is inside the Italian, therefore, one must look towards future and not back to the past. [From a private conversation with Lisa Ponti in Milan, 10th April 1996]. *Domus* published an article by Gio Ponti on this villa in n. 375, 1961, pp. 1 - 40, entitled 'Una villa "fiorentina"'.

Which would mean: 'Does an architecture exist which would be recognised as Italian for reasons other than that of its geographical position?'

Intuition answers before analytic demonstration, so that a firm, immediate reply is at once necessary. 'Naturally, it exists' - though doubts spring up: 'How can this be proved?'²

According to Rogers, the answer lay primarily in the cultural background that influenced the deeper characteristics of the individual. Every individual, like every work of art, could be considered as a product of many streams, dependent on the development of a particular theme, a figurative style and a relationship in space. This plurality of expression looked for a balance in the constant relationship between the single parts and the whole. The feeling for the 'typically Italian' could therefore be sensed in the synthesis, where decorative values consisted of the interplay of volumes and surfaces while emphasising structure and joints. In this theoretical debate, modernity signified a moral commitment for national aims responding to European developments and applied to the discussion about the role of architects without making a distinction between their creative output in the form of a building, an object or written statements.

3.1.1

An integration of the artist and the architect

Ponti had perceived in the early 1930s, articulated in 'Art and Industry' (1933), the significance of the co-operation between art and industry and argued that the artist had to animate design and create an industrial style.³ This was essential, he believed, because one of the characteristics that artists brought to industry, was inventiveness, in addition to modernising taste and oxygenating cultural contacts. There was a fatal necessity, for those who wanted to live and work, to adapt themselves to the changes made, indicated, and noted by artists. Suggestions about taste were occasions for work, and they generated the circulation of money. Taste and imagination were imponderable economic factors connected to price and to practicality. They were a consumer need that would prove fatal for industry if ignored.⁴ The wish for materialising these thoughts was strongly communicated in the post-war period. The need for industry to become modernised encouraged architects to find new ways of designing that would take ideas from arts, crafts and industry and mingle into

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² Rogers, E. N. 'The Tradition of Modern Architecture in Italy/Tradizione 'Dell'Architettura Moderna Italiana'. An introduction to G.E. Kidder Smith, AIA (1954) *ITALY BUILDS l'Italia costruisce. Its Modern Architecture and native inheritance*. The Architectural Press, London, p. 9.

³ Ponti, G. 'Art and Industry' in *La casa all'italiana*, Domus publications, Milan 1933.

⁴ Cited from Pietra, U. L. (ed.) (1996) *Gio Ponti*. Rizzoli New York., p. 81.

a whole - to design a new way of living responding to the devastating effects of the immediate war years.

Seen particularly within the context of *Domus* and *Stile Industria*, the object was projected as being able to communicate a way of life and to give an image of man's artistic sensitivity and social status. As such it represented to a degree the cultural level of the beholder. The designed object was conceived in the urban fabric as a tool for making a connection with life itself and at large they would converse with each other and participate in each other's sign symbols. Within the domestic landscape, a unity of composition was significant but its logic lay in the skills of communication. In terms of the architect himself therefore, he had to take sides in order to find a link to connect people. Recalling a quote from Baudelaire in Rogers's editorial 'Elogio della tendenza' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 216, 1946, the French writer argued that in order to be just, criticism had to be partial, biased and political. At the same time it had to be made from a right point of view which also opened up more horizons.⁵ Translated into the intellectual role of the architect, it was important to attain an understanding between him, the artist, and the public as well as to be coherent. Rogers used three terms or moments in the historical process, 'coerenza', 'tendenza' and 'stile', to define the artistic phenomenon. 'Coerenza' was necessary for the artist to form proper connections with the ethical world from which each act took its share. 'Tendenza' was the translation of these acts within a well defined intellectual rigour, and 'stile' was the formal expression of 'coerenza' and 'tendenza'. To talk of 'tendenza' was an act of modesty, Rogers continued, which introduced singular activities to the culture of their time. It regarded itself as an element within society able to support every work in creating history and one which would be represented in meaningful 'stiles'. In other words, it was the artist's "duty" to weld popular culture and the culture of the elite together in a single tradition. Only then could authenticity and critical evaluation be fused. Applying these three terms, the artist managed to unite the different layers of society in a language that aimed to find norms that stabilised human relations and measurements and would also help people to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the environment.⁶ This became very close to Theodor Adorno's understanding of divisions in society which he expressed in 'Morality and Style' (1945) published in *Minima Moralia*:

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⁵ Rogers, E. N. 'Elogio della tendenza' in *Domus la casa dell'uomo* n. 216, 1946, p. 1.

⁶ Rogers further explained this notion of "tendenza" in his editorial 'Le responsabilità verso la tradizione' in *Casabella continuità* n. 202 1954. The article was crucial in that it explained a "tendenza" already alive in Italian architecture by giving it a theoretical foundation, and indicated the ways in which northern culture experienced populist inspiration. Within such a perspective, where populism guaranteeing authenticity for a language intent on critical interpretation, works like those of Gardella, the BBPR, and G. De Carlo of the fifties became more comprehensible.

Rigorous formulation demands unequivocal comprehension, conceptual effort, to which people are deliberately discouraged, and imposes on them in advance of any content a suspension of all received opinions, and thus an isolation, that they violently resist. Only what they do not need first to understand, they consider understandable; only the word coined by commerce, and really alienated, touches them as familiar. Few things contribute so much to the demoralization of intellectuals. Those who would escape it must recognize the advocates of communicability as traitors to what they communicate.⁷

The fact that the client was not always prepared for a unprecedented design, made the artist even more conscious of making a reference to the cultural heritage when designing an object and hence to prevent it to weaken its context when mass produced by industrial methods. The BBPR group had already argued in their book *Stile* in 1936 for the necessity to reconnect the phenomenology of art with the essence of culture, to reconnect it to the 'civiltà' of every period that knew how to seize art and give it the responsibility that it was due. It was not merely a matter of interpretation, but rather to mould a moral position for 'civiltà'. It was insufficient to consider 'stile' only in terms of pure aesthetics. It also showed a respect for moral reality and faith which sustained and guided humanity. Equally the public and the artist needed to become familiar with the analogy between beauty and morality and to link life and the transcendental.⁸ 'Stile' was, in other words, a formal and moral concept born from a collective act through which architects hoped to solve the relationship between architecture and contemporaneity. Following that idiom in the aftermath of the war, Rogers looked for a truth that would link the subjective to the actual object, the particular to the general, the national to the universal. The object would be an expression of 'truth' that would be put into crisis and questioned in relation to man and his subjective experience. Design was hence a political act of which 'stile' was a vehicle for confronting society, history and the anthropological state of human relations. Edoardo Persico had described this need in his article, 'Punto e da capo per l'architettura' (1934);

The artists, today, have to confront the most 'thorny' problem of Italian life; the ability to believe in a precise ideology, the wish to

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⁷ Adorno, T. (1974) 'Morality and style' (1945) in *Minima Moralia*. NLB, London, p. 101. First published in by Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1951. This book was translated into Italian around 1951 and proved to be an influential source for the group at *Casabella continuità* as a criticism against consumer society. [Gregotti, V. (1968) *New Directions in Italian Architecture*, p. 54.]

⁸ BBPR (1936) *Stile*, Milano. Here, cited from Cuicci, G., Dal Co, F. (1995) *ibid.*, p. 137 - 138.

Continuing with this line of thought, Gillo Dorfles reiterated that the social engagement of the artist was heavily tied to the political situation at the time. He argued in 1951 in his article 'Arte e tecnica nella società moderna' in *Aut Aut* that the arts were always tied to society.¹⁰ Through his extreme sensitivity, the artist interpreted transformations, the social, technical and economic evolution, and made them his own without imposing preconceptions, apriorism, or dogmas. Furthermore, the architect influenced and tried to transform contemporary taste. This he did, not by imposing a law on art, but by conceptualising the arts as a means of individual expression, which simultaneously obtained universality from its intimate aesthetic value and ability to communicate to all men. Writing along similar lines, Paci had written in *Esistenzialismo e storicismo* (1950), that art, as form, obtained a human value and performed the function of communication between people. The value of forms was equivalent to the ethical value of human community.¹¹ The arts offered humanity an image of perfection, like a pure form where the synthesis of human relations was drawn together. The root of this form was not always tangible nor was its meaning quite clear. Like the aesthetic form, it brought with it a coded message. The key to that symbolism was looked for in the historic condition, in the condition that had given birth to poetry and the life of the poet, the psychology of people, the learned commentary, and the analysis of language. All these elements were useful in themselves but none of them opened the secret door of the arts because the form of art is untouchable. To change a word, or a curve in a design, was the same as to destroy the work of art. What had to be changed was life itself. The arts set the problem of communication between people and to lay down the existence of an ideal human society.

Some years later, Enzo Paci made a distinction between aesthetics and the artistic in his article, 'Il metodo industriale l'edilizia e il problema estetico' (1957). "Aesthetics", in the sense of beauty, could be anything organic; for

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⁹ Persico, E. 'Punto e da capo per l'architettura' in *Domus* n. 83, 1934. This article was a response to Gio Ponti's challenge in the article, 'Necessità di un riesame?' (*Domus* 1934), a contribution to the debate on design as a political commitment.

Despite their ideological differences, Ponti (an active architect under the Fascist Regime) and Persico (a pronounced anti-Fascist), found a meeting point, promoting expressions of architecture that seemed to encounter those of convergence. An instance of this could be found in Persico's interior design in the large hall of the 1936 Triennale where the metaphysical tension of its ghostlike pillars was itself connected with that classic ideal which was one of the fundamental facts of the Novecento movement which Ponti was a member of.

Canella, G. 'The Other Ponti' in Pietra, U. L. (ed.) (1996) *Gio Ponti* Rizzoli, New York, p. XXIV. First published in Italy by Coliseum Editore s.r.l., Milan in 1988.

¹⁰ Dorfles, G. 'Arte e tecnica nella società moderna' in *Aut Aut*. Rivista di filosofo e di cultura n. 3, 1951, Milano, pp. 241 - 242.

¹¹ Paci, E. (1950) *Esistenzialismo e storicismo*. Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano p. 75 - 91.

instance, a mineral, a flower, or an animal. It also included the harmony of a building with the landscape, with materials, and the social and historical foundations. The "artistic" had an individual character which one found more in paintings and sculptures than in architecture. However, the artistic element should be present in architecture if it was to be conceived as a work of art and at the same time, correspond to a level of aesthetics and objective conditions.¹² Art had a cultural autonomy that affected the economic and political system. That is, artistic merits enabled transformation to take place in the production circle, both in terms of function and aesthetics. An artistic form required an invention of new prototypes that led to new uses. As such the artist created a new use for his object; the object first and then its need. The role had been reversed for the designer. He was no longer required to design out of necessity. As Argan would write in 1972,

... the object teaches one how to act according to a plan for action: its human and social significance consists in the fact that, since behaviour is a way of life, in designing objects one designs life itself.¹³

Recounted in this way, the architect engaged in his work and committed himself to the whole of human society. Creating and encouraging social changes with his work, he participated in the economic development of the country, that is, to build up the economic future that was weighed against international competitors. The fact that he placed his scope of work within the realms of the arts was unique in the architectural work at the time. His ethics, ideology and artistic role were all part of the same aim, that is, to create an identity of design that could be described as Italian embedded in the interpretation of form, utility and beauty.

3.1.2

Debating the fusion of arts, crafts and industry

The theme of reaching a wide audience was the principal theme of the X Triennale in 1954 in Milan, that is, to recognise this concern as one of the most vivid problems of the day. The new collaboration which had sprung up between art and industry would, in a certain sense, "unite all civilised people. The problem *La Triennale* engaged in was everyone's problem," Ponti insisted in his editorial 'La X Triennale è in corso' (1954).¹⁴ This was a typically Milanese phenomenon, he argued, because it was in this city that this collaboration was carried out purposefully, effectively and spontaneously.

¹² Paci, E. 'Il metodo industriale l'edilizia e il problema estetico' (1957) in *Relazioni e significati III* (1966), *ibid.*, p. 170 - 171.

¹³ Argan, G.C. 'Ideological development in the thought and imagery of Italian design' in Ambasz, E. (ed) *ibid.*, p. 359.

¹⁴ Ponti, G. 'La X Triennale è in corso' in *Domus* n. 299, 1954, p. 1.

Furthermore, the movement of modern architecture in Italy was born and developed in Milan, as well as the rejuvenation and production of industrial design. Finally, magazines and publishers located in Milan introduced this activity in Italy and abroad. The city, in other words, managed to create an atmosphere that benefited the integration of the diverse disciplines; the architect, technician, craftsman and artist. An integration that looked for a result with unique quality embedded in the collective and individual culture and tradition.

The central topics of debate at the conference on industrial design held in conjunction with the X Triennale were the themes of 'quality and quantity' advanced by Giulio Carlo Argan. Enzo Paci had pointed out that the designer stood between art and society. These thoughts did not merely interpret the products' functions. They confirmed that the meaning of the form created by the designer affected the whole of human life. Both Argan and Paci agreed that the framework of designing the complete planning arrangement of human activities began with town planning. Addressing this point from a different side, Rogers argued that industrial design was not a new artistic category but simply a more up to date technical means which tried to help by generalising and distributing socially and economically what used to be an artistic production.¹⁵ It was apparent from the conference that neither economic productivity nor mass production were priorities for industrial production. The intention of industrial methods was to achieve a new beauty and not merely to conquer the market where objects remained at competitive prices. The spatial relationship between object and man was a component which reinforced the moral dilemma of utility and beauty. The function of the object not only corresponded to need, it had an added value which referred to how it was represented, its image. No act was ever detached from a function. Function became more complex and expanded until it reached deep into the social sphere. As such, the main function of design was to keep intact and strengthen the quality of the individual man and to make of him a social being, part of a larger context. The quality of the object was achieved by co-ordination. This was quite different from the image of the American industrial designer that Peter Müller-Munk presented in his article in *Stile Industria*, in an issue containing a review of the X Triennale. Here he stated that he came from "a tradition where quality becomes invisible from quantity. The American tradition of aesthetic lies within its future, not in its past."¹⁶ The designer speculated on the effects of the product, its appearance, utility and price value, believing that it would be for the benefit of the market. People had the right to make their own choice, and on that principle competition was based. The public was the one that judged any design efforts and provided the designers

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¹⁵ Cited from Labò, M. 'The Congress of Industrial Design Tenth Triennale, Milano' in *Casabella continuità* n. 203, 1954, p. 88.

¹⁶ Müller-Munk, P. 'La professione dell'industrial designer negli Stati Uniti' in *Stile Industria* n. 2, 1954. [no page numbers]

with the final approval. Müller-Munk went on to emphasise that no other procedure served a just democracy. It was simply a moral obligation to serve the public. From this point of view, the American designer was not very concerned about the education of taste or making the public conscious of the designer's aim to elevate standards of design. Design depended more on the flow of the market and obsolescence rather than cultivating cultural links with the product. Against this outlook Giulio Argan believed that a way to render industrial design popular was to return to the forms of craftsmanship which would mark a real contest between the artist and the technician. This, he argued in 'Arte e produzione all X Triennale, Milano' (1954), was probably because the models commonly created by industry for general use corresponded to the outlook of a single person and of a society, while there was a tendency to find the historical form of collectivity in popular traditions.¹⁷ Industrial design was not only a matter of beauty and technology, it actually expanded into the consciousness and subconsciousness of man and became part of his life and culture. The question of time was hence a major element in the architectural discourse and corresponded to the initial difference between the Italian and American way of thinking in terms of industrial design because, how was one to have a modern industrial economy without lapsing into obsolescence that was so essential to it. In his article 'Design by Choice' (1961), Reyner Banham drew attention to this point and wrote;

... the fundamental difficulty is incompatible rates of obsolescence; architects for entirely valid reasons, are habituated to think in terms of a time scale whose basic unit is about half a century. Industrial design works on a variety of time-scales, roughly proportional to the bulk of the objects being designed, and none of them phased in units one fifth the size of the architect's.¹⁸

For the Italian designer no division was made between the object and the building, both demanded a design that had a dialogue with history and culture. This was the added quality of design debated through the newly established award, Compasso d'oro (1954). The award bestowed recognition upon the producer and the designer of the prize-winning model, considered outstanding for its aesthetic qualities and the technical perfection of its production and projected its interests in industrial design in setting out a practice of good

¹⁷ Argan, G. C. 'Arte e produzione alla X Triennale' in *Casabella continuità*, n. 203, numero dedicato alla X Triennale, 1954, p. 39. Argan had already elaborated this argument in his book, *Walter Gropius e la Bauhaus*. Einaudi, Torino. First published in 1951, this book had been an important source of ideas for the group around *Casabella continuità* at the time, according to Vittorio Gregotti in *New Directions in Italian Architecture*, (1968), p. 56.

¹⁸ Banham, R. 'Design by Choice' in *Architectural Review*, vol. 130, n. 773, July 1961. p. 45.

design.¹⁹ Furthermore, the guidelines of the competition required that contacts were established with industry, and that products had to be actually in production. It was therefore clear that industrial production was a complex interplay of economics, aesthetics, culture and customs. Compasso d'Oro was the first European prize to reward the "aesthetic quality of the product" since 1851, when Prince Albert instituted the "gold medal for aesthetically appreciable industrial wares" on the occasion of the Universal Exposition in London. Originally conceived by Gio Ponti, the idea was welcomed by Romualdo Borletti and Cesare Brustio, president and vice-president respectively of the Rinascente department store chain. Rinascente's interest in industrial aesthetics had already been demonstrated in 1952, when they had organized "exhibitions of Italian quality" at the flagship store in Milan's Piazza del Duomo. The award was originally called the "Rinascente Golden Compass", and it was presented for the first time in Milan at the X Triennale, the winner being chosen from among 5,700 entries.²⁰

Wanting to give a maximum importance to this award, *Stile Industria* set up an enquiry into the major factors that influenced "good design" in 'Primo bilancio disegno industriale in Italia. I problemi del disegno industriale in Italia visti dai componenti la Giuria del premio "Il Compasso d'Oro"' (1955). The enquiry asked the questions: How did industrial manufacturers aim to increase the aesthetic level of their products? How did the public respond to the new design and what was its role in the process of design? Finally, could designers look towards a favourable future?²¹ The findings of the enquiry were directed to the appointed jury; Aldo Borletti, President of the Rinascente department, Cesare Brustio, the vice-president of the Rinascente, Gio Ponti, the editor of *Domus*, Alberto Rosselli, editor of *Stile Industria*, Marco Zanuso, member of the executive committee for the X Triennale, all of whose arguments were proof of designers' growing commitment to encourage industrial design to become an integral part of everyday life through the education of the consumer, at the same time, as maintaining formal sophistication. In his response, Ponti showed that firms such as, Alfa Romeo, Cassina, Pirelli Sapsa, and Tecno were enthusiastic in producing 'good design' with architects and artists like, Nizzoli, Zanuso, De Carli, Huber, Rosselli and Peressutti. Ponti considered these examples extremely important as a

¹⁹ Primo bilancio disegno industriale in Italia. I problemi del disegno industriale in Italia visti dai componenti la Giuria del premio "Il Compasso d'Oro" in *Stile Industria* 1955, n. 3. Tav. I to Tav. IV.

²⁰ For further reading see; 'Il Compasso d'Oro. Storia e significati del Compasso d'oro' in *Stile Industria* n. 1, 1995, Gregotti, V. 'Italian Design, 1945-1971' in Ambasz E. (ed.) (1972) *Italy; The New Domestic Landscape* and Pansera, A. (1993) *Storia del disegno industriale italiano*. Editori Laterza, Roma-Bari.

²¹ Primo bilancio disegno industriale in Italia. I problemi del disegno industriale in Italia visti dai componenti la Giuria del premio "Il Compasso d'Oro" in *Stile Industria* n. 3, 1955, Tav. I to Tav. IV. The citations below from Ponti, Rosselli, Borletti, Brustio and Zanuso are taken from this article.

demonstration of industry having an increased interest in "good design". He argued that "good design" must be a source for the export of our products and be the work of our creation. Brustio believed that generally people's sensitivity towards the form would allow them to recognise a well designed product, while Ponti added that the public, who was gradually being educated through magazines, exhibitions and events such as Compasso d'oro, demanded models of good design, although there was still a long way to go. Rosselli argued that despite industrial evolution having increased and transformed the means of production, it was inevitable that aesthetic values had to be found in order to transform them into the new production line and adjust to new consumer markets. To guarantee a quality of design, there had to be an outside factor which derived from an artistic sensitivity that went back to the craftsman, a perfection that came from the hands of man rather than the machine. This fusion was precisely what would make exportation of Italian design objects so successful and unique on the international market. Rosselli asserted that products demanded appropriate research in every sector and should not be drawn into easy and fashionable formal solutions as so often happened when design was directed to satisfy demand for a quick success. The future of industrial design would lie in the analysis of specific problems of the socio-cultural aspects of form recognised as Italian.

It was clear from these different settings for the debate on future of the industrial design that the object, although serial produced, had to represent the individual consumer collectively. That is, it had to acknowledge in its form and content that the human environment consisted of a complex set of relationships and interdisciplinary domains brought together in a synchronous meeting. In 1956, Dorfles made this a subject of the article, 'Arte e tecnica e l'estetica industriale' where he argued that it would be worth waiting for the latest developments of the diverse arts. From reciprocal influences, between architecture and the plastic arts, the industrial object and the last development of the fine arts, these different fields could form new stylistic features. Features which, absorbing the technical and artistic heritage of humanity, would find an important coherence and link with the contemporary ethical and aesthetic situation.²² It was a matter of giving a meaning to the environment, a meaning that was already present within the collective society and the individual consumer but was re-interpreted in a context of new means of industrial production and the artistic heritage.

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²² Dorfles, G. 'Arte e tecnica e l'estetica industriale' in *Domus* n. 319, 1956, p. 43.

3.1.3

A union of opposites forges a new aesthetic sensibility

An article in *Stile Industria*, 'I bulini di Pollero' (1954), reviewed carving tools by the artist Gian Mario Pollero.²³ Photographs that followed the article showed a study made by Pollero in order to achieve a type of efficient and adaptable shape for the tools that returned to the origin of the form in the relationship between hand and use. Based on a greater sensitivity for tactile and visual effects of the form, Pollero investigated the line of the hand according to the appropriate grip that it needed to fully control expected movements. As an example of an improvement, images were depicted showing a development of the design process, from an old tool, the handle of which was an uncomfortable cylinder, to a tool providing a perfect grip for the hand. [fig. 38] With this article, *Stile Industria* wanted to emphasise that whether the means of production were industrial or based on craftsmanship, the method of reaching the ultimate form derived from research into the signification of forms. To be truly functional, the form of the object signified a meaning, or a thought, that was its statement. This unity of form, utility and beauty was depicted by the sculptural qualities of the tools. They were photographed in various positions where the degree of lighting emphasised their three-dimensionality and tactile effects, and made their curved and smooth lines explicit with shadows and unexpected perspectives. In the same issue, Rosselli argued that

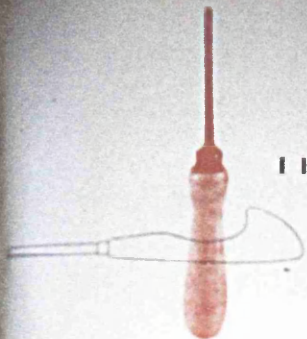
... the useful object, while having its own personality, its own beauty, becomes also an expression of society more alive and sensitive, of a vast and universal culture. The number, the serial, the quantity no longer represent disheartening prospects, an uncertainty of the future for our industrial age. On the contrary, one can speculate from these signs. They provide the vehicle for a new aesthetic experience, homogeneous and consistent with every manifestation of our life.²⁴

This new aesthetic experience profited from the crafted object which already had an established methodological process. That is, the intelligent making of the model, the solution of the particular form, and the right and sensible approach to the material proved to be the means to help in defining the physical form of the industrial object. Illustrating this point, the front cover for this second issue of *Stile Industria* in 1954, designed by the artist Bruno Munari, represented the changes within 'Milanese' society. [fig. 39] Apart from bearing the initials of the X Triennale (XT) to which this issue was dedicated, the cover showed a model of a car in grey. Within it were the colours, black, blue and yellow, representing different elements of the car and

²³ 'I bulini di Pollero' in *Stile Industria* n. 2, 1954, p. 23.

²⁴ Rosselli, A. 'L'oggetto d'uso alla Triennale' in *Stile Industria* n. 2, 1954, p. 1.

I bulini di Pollero



In alto: la scultura di un bulino della produzione Pollero. Sotto: alcuni disegni di Gian Maria Pollero, uno di tipo antico e gli altri frutto della sperimentazione. Gli schizzi sono in gesso e quelli in legno. Nella foto: un bulino di tipo antico e uno di tipo moderno. In alto: un bulino di tipo antico e uno di tipo moderno. In alto: un bulino di tipo antico e uno di tipo moderno.

Insiderismo perennemente alcune reazioni con-
dizionanti alla produzione di questi buli-
ni, indicati dal pittore Gian Maria Pol-
lero. Il carattere artigianale è quasi per-
petuo, il risultato nella forma, invece, di
questi bulini, nel materiale impiegato per
la lavorazione, nella modellatura delle so-
stanze, aggrava, rispondendo, ad un par-
ticolare, sempre e nel suo particolare, l'uso
del legno. La mano, nell'atto di prendere
in sé un lavoro d'arte (l'incisione) ha un
carattere l'indifferenza della vecchia forma
dell'impugnatura ed ha dato origine ad
una nuova di forme più aperte, così più
elastiche, le sensazioni di un gesto ha
quasi questa scultura, infatti un bulino
ha le premesse di raggiungere, attraverso
la forma, un'idea di un bulino, un bulino,
il bulino più generale di una scultura.
Bulino nelle più belle espressioni della
scultura, come questi caratteri di parti non
solo nell'impugnatura e di quelle quan-
tissime nella forma, monumenti, la forma
della scultura dei materiali tecnici ed
artificiali di produzione. Insomma, non
solo, ma gli elementi di una produzione
e artigianale, quanto a questa è
quella di una produzione industriale, non
solo, ma, come elemento di con-
tatto per i quali, nel bulino, prolungano
i valori più significativi dell'artigianato
e, in questo senso, dell'arte industriale. In-
oltre, come del resto è gli elementi del-
la scultura, è gli elementi della scultura
contemporanea, dove, infatti, la natura è mol-
to più, non solo, ma, come, rispondendo, in

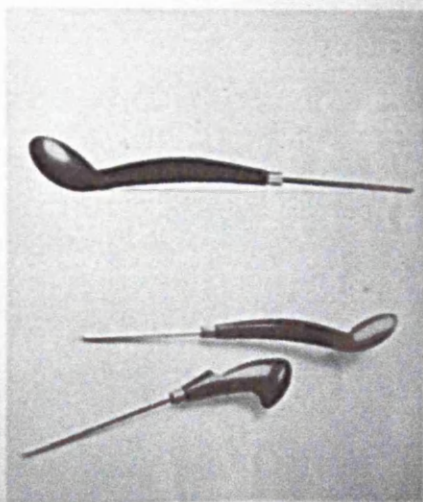


Fig. 38.-'I builini di Pollero' *Stile Industria* n. 2 (1954).
The engraving tools modified by Pollero showed how the beauty of the object was integrated into its form and function which was furthermore emphasised by the lighting effects.

N. 2 ottobre 1954

STILE INDUSTRIALE

XT

disegno industriale
industrial design
grafica graphic art
imballaggio
packaging



Fig. 39.- Front cover by Bruno Munari for *Stile Industria* n. 2 (1954)
The sophistication of the presentation of the carving tool against the abstraction of the car is a reinforcement of the dialogue of different methods of production based on crafts and industry.

their mechanism. Another reading of the same image suggests that the different colours created the shape of the carving tool itself which moulded the car model. This interpretation would imply that mass-production still relied heavily on hand crafted skills. Below the image of the car was a photograph of a carving tool framed in a negative image of itself (it could also suggest a more fluid line of the car's silhouette). Knowing the apparent conflict within the debate about industrial design, the cover portrayed the dialogue of opposites; between craftsmanship and industrial methods of production; the slow movement of carving set against the great speed of the car. Within their different characteristics, craftsmanship and industry contained conflicting elements, yet within the Italian setting they were made compatible in the creation of quality of design. This could be seen in furniture by for instance, Franco Albini, shown at the IX Triennale. Reviewed in *Domus* as 'secure' although 'avant-garde', they consisted of a table, an armchair (birch, walnut, seats of foam rubber with a cloth cover), folding chair and a wardrobe.²⁵ [fig. 40a,b] They were not only interesting for their combination of materials and structure, but also for the modes of joining. They managed to sustain their expressiveness by communicating through their own architectonic and sculptural qualities. Albini's furniture was an example that demonstrated that whether formed from the basis of arts, crafts or tradition, design was loyal to the use of the imagination. Contrasting materials were juxtaposed and the joints were an integral part of the sculptural quality of the object. The object/furniture did not only serve its functional value. It created a feeling for a new aesthetic sensibility which lay exactly in these juxtapositions and joints rather than any added ornamentation. This importance on the structure of the artefact could be read as revealing the structure of society. That is, the method for understanding social structure as well as the individual object lay in their fragments and parts. They exposed the basic ordering of things from the part to the whole.

In the article 'Forme' (1950), *Domus* encouraged Italian architects to confront the "essential-forms" of the object.²⁶ In addition to Ponti's coffee machine for Pavoni, it included a car by the sculptor, Arzens; tables by the architect, Charles Eames; and, cutlery by the designer, Hal N. Adams. Emphasising its argument, the article used the Pavoni coffee machine as an example where a product had been designed with the participation of an architect, in this case Gio Ponti, who was not only involved in the appearance of the object but in the intense act of drawing out the expression of the "true" form of the mechanism. It seemed, the article continued, that in the past when machines had been decorated in order to serve as household furniture, the decoration had been the only link between "mechanical" and "artistic" forms. 'Now' the former had to be enriched to come closer to the latter. Ponti's coffee machine

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²⁵ Ponti, G. 'I mobili, l'insegnamento e la vocazione di Albini' in *Domus* n. 263, 1951 pp. 10 - 11.

²⁶ Autonomous 'Forme' in *Domus* n. 228, 1948, p. 50.

contained four spouts which, in itself, referred to the problem of combining mass production and individuality. Its case contained a network of operations, like a dashboard. The aim was to eliminate, or bring together, all the protruding and confusing meeting points of the old machine. The equipment was thus reduced to three big simple and neat elements - case, body and spouts. This enabled the forms to reach a perfect simplicity, equal to musical wind instruments. An equality had to be achieved or, an unrestrained union of opposites - the serial and the unique object - within interior design. The serial product had to be genuine in the same way as a work of art had to be authentic. The article 'La serie e il pezzo unico' (1948), signed P.F., had likewise argued that the panorama of work in Italy consisted of a research carried out to find economic solutions to the problem of housing and an enthusiastic longing for technological and aesthetic refinement for exceptional pieces.²⁷ These were the two points or "conversation" of two extremes that manufacturing relied on, and from which followed an economic restoration of the country and a recovery of its prestige. These interests were also vital for both the serially produced and the single object. Everything in the house had to be brought to the same level. The descriptive terms were no longer marked by the luxury or economical but the ingenuous and authentic. The wish lay in the desire to make the house true, an entirely unique "piece" ['pezzo'] in itself.²⁸ A clear example was that of Carlo Mollino's furniture, published in the same issue. Here the "conversation" between the serial and the unique managed to create light and simple furniture that brought forth elements both from musical instruments and primitive sculpture.²⁹ Ponti found an explanation for this refinement, partly in the use of neo-classical forms. He stated in 'Considerazioni su alcuni mobili' (1950),

... the classical derives from temperament and cultural upbringing. (Must we deny it? or, let it down? Why? Is it not our reality and our strength? Why do we let it down in architecture and acknowledge it, for example, in literature? Is this classicism not the richness of personalities of the Italian people? ...)

It is this vocation that drives me and other Italians to design fine furniture, slender and (without modesty and without being afraid of the word, beautiful) elegant.³⁰

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27 P. F, 'La serie e il pezzo unico' in *Domus* n. 227, 1948, p. xxi.

28 This way of thinking immediately recalls Ponti's rhetoric back in 1933 'Antico e Moderno' Polemiche d'arte, in *Domus* n. 65 where his inspirations lay in the passion for contradictions between 'old' and 'new' authentic furniture and the promotion of 'tasteful' furniture that would encourage an economic prosperity and national prestige.

29 'Esperienze formali nell'arredamento' Arch. Carlo Mollino. in *Domus* n. 227, 1948, p. 12 - 22.

30 Ponti, G. 'Considerazioni su alcuni mobili' in *Domus*, n. 243, 1950, p. 26. The article spans five pages (26 to 30), of which three pages are only photographs with captions.

Fig. 40a.- 'I mobili, l'insegnamento e la vocazione di Albin' *Domus* n. 262 (1951).
The photographic message of these pieces of furniture is established from the various angles portrayed. The viewer is shown perspectives that emphasise the mechanism and structural joints; details that support the whole.

Fig. 40b.-'I mobili, l'insegnamento e la vocazione di Albin' *Domus* n. 262 (1951).

Classicism was an inherent taste, or attitude, rather than fixed forms of a specific order. It was an attitude that mingled with modernity, where the past merged with the present to create an individual expression based on the personality of the designer. In the co-operation with Ideal Standard, Gio Ponti designed parts for lavatories (toilet, washing basin, etc.) in 1954, shown at the X Triennale. [fig. 41] His means to achieve "good design" and to find the true form were based on his attitude. His method of working was published in *Stile Industria* where he identified this attitude with "la linea italiana".³¹ "La linea italiana" was not a new calligraphy, not a fashion, but the result of an intensive thinking about the finished form of things. One had to be preoccupied only with their essence and the work of art, and not the market. This was according to Ponti, his way of thinking, whether it was for his objects, product design or, a building. He refused to accept superimposed forms and insisted that the psychological effects of the form pre-empted a signification of its function which excluded any memory of figurative sources. The aim was to recapture the true form, that which had been the original form. Working on the wash-basin, Ponti used non-geometric and non-architectonic shapes and substituted the column, - which was in fact only a case, - with forms that followed the forward-movement of the forearm of the user. The form achieved a logical solution and became "a true form", based on an ideal model of the individual. In conjunction with the text, images illustrated the artistic qualities of the sanitary fittings. They were projected as isolated against an empty and white background, like sculptures, carved and with smooth contours, that reinforced the effect of their chiaroscuro. Furthermore, detailing and technical drawings indicated the reader how these objects operated and demonstrated that the 'natural' flow of the form corresponded to the comfort of the user. From this point of view, it was clear that the beauty of the object did not lay in added ornamentation. The right, simple, true, honest, and authentic qualities were embedded in the object itself. It had a distinctive aura that was expressed through its materials and composition, and was a feeling unique to itself.

Approached from the side of the industrial manufacturer, Marcello Nizzoli's Lexicon 80 typewriter of 1948 for Olivetti was a representative of a standard office typewriter made into "an object of high style" as Adrian Forty referred to it in his book, *Objects of Desire* (1992).³² Adriano Olivetti emphasised that good design was a function of the balance between art and engineering.³³ His policy was to refine known forms and to bring them to perfection. For example, Olivetti's little portable electric typewriter, Lettera 22, was derived from 'Lexikon 80'. The programme was "simplification". Refinement was

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³¹ Ponti, G. 'Considerazioni sui rapporti tra forma e funzionalità' in *Stile Industria* n. 2, 1954, p. 13 - 14.

³² Forty, A. (1992) *Objects of Desire*, p. 153.

³³ Hartland Thomas, M. 'Design Policy Begins at the Top' in *Design* n. 14, 1950. Council of Industrial Design, London, pp. 8 - 10.

achieved in the process of simplification, but there was no revolutionary change in the accepted design of a typewriter. The general form followed the classical typewriter lines dictated by the disposition of the mechanism, and then the case was designed by the firm's consultant, Marcello Nizzoli in collaboration with Mr Beccio, the Technical General Manager. The sophisticated shape achieved was a sure sign of close attention to design all through the mechanism, which even extended to the pale grey colour, in line with modern opinion upon the avoidance of brightness of contrast between writing paper and its background. Bearing in mind the sophistication required, the choice of an architect, or in the choice of an author, was not a matter of indifference, but one of the principal decisions made by the industry.

This fusion of arts and crafts in Italian design excited interest abroad - for example in American and English journals: Henrion, F. 'Italian Journey' *Design* n. 1, 1949, London; Schreiber, L. 'Contrasts in Current Italian Design, in *Design*, n. 7 1949, London; Allen, D. 'Given four walls and a ceiling' Magistretti props up the present amid the past in *Interior* vol. cx, n. 5, 1950 New York. Among the seminal objects, in what came to be called "the Italian line", were a number of mass-produced metal goods. These were described by the French graphic designer, Frédérick Henrion, in the article 'Italian Journey' published in *Design* in 1949.³⁴ Among the objects was Ponti's La Pavoni Espresso coffee machine described as "a revolutionary piece of domestic machinery, pleasant for the eye, easy to manipulate and clean, efficient in use". It exhibited familiar forms of streamlining with its sleek and fluid contours yet, it was distinguished from it by its highly sculptural aesthetics. Alfa-Romeo SS, with the body by Pinin Farina, was an example of which the Italian designers found a way "to combine the general American trends with elegance and with certain classic standard of aesthetic." Additionally, the Vespa motor scooter (1946), "the most important of all new Italian design-phenomena", was both "stream-lined and extremely pleasant to look at" and had become "an important social factor in Italian village and town life". Designed for the street, workplace and the home, these products were widely disseminated and hugely popular. Frédérick Henrion judged the reason for this success to be in the Italian artistic heritage of the architect-designers. Where industry was able to get underway, he argued, it quickly achieved a high level of technological maturity, owing to internal reasons largely attributable to a natural bent and talent for improvisation. In part, it relied on the intelligence of the old-style artisan type of worker, with his roots in a technical tradition that, while it may not have been at all up to date, was nevertheless many-sided. This enabled him to work out systems that otherwise could have been achieved only on the basis of planned rationalisation. Italian craftsmanship was also exhibited abroad as a sign of high quality design and was supposed to address people of taste and visual sophistication. In 1949 the Art Institute of Chicago approved a field survey of Italian crafts and industrial arts for an

³⁴ Henrion, F. 'Italian Journey' in *Design* n. 1, 1949, London, p. 7 - 10.

[illegible]

...the ...

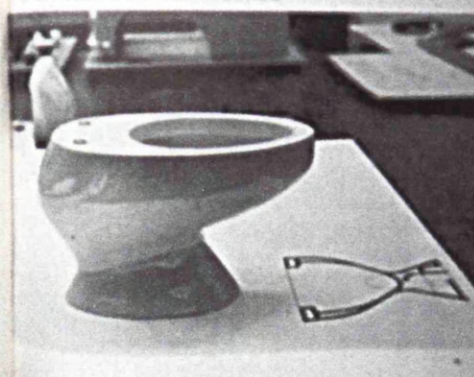


Fig. 41.- 'Considerazioni sui rapporti tra forma e funzionalità' *Stile Industria* n. 2 (1954).

With this products for Ideal Standard, the reader could see the result of the architect's search for the true form in its 'logical' shape and technical solutions.

exhibition to be held in the United States. The artefacts shown at this travelling exhibition, *Italy at Work* in 1951, were primarily vernacular craft objects ranging from ceramics, glass, religious figurines, mosaics, and wickerwork. But there were also a number of prototypes for furniture, lighting fixtures, and other furnishings by designers such as Franco Albini and Carlo Mollino as well as a few mass-manufactured products such as a home coffee machine for Robbiati company, an adding machine by Nizzoli for Olivetti and the Lambretta motor scooter that were shown at the end of the catalogue. The designers Gio Ponti, Fabrizio Clerici, Luigi Cosenza, Roberto Menghi, and Carlo Mollino were asked to design special room settings for the exhibition. Tradition and innovation stood alongside each other, and craft and industrial production were seen as two ends of the same thread, representing the before and after Fascism. Walter Dorwin Teague wrote the foreword to the exhibition and commented upon the upsurge of the Italian vitality that had stored itself up during the long Fascist break. He laid down the essential requirements for the exhibition in an article, 'Italy at Work: record of a journey' where he initiated a myth being created about Italian design:

... anything we chose must be original and contemporary in design - for this reason much fine workmanship following the old conventional Italian patterns was passed up - and our selections must be things that would appeal, conceivably, to people of taste and perception in America. The fine arts were ruled as beyond our scope, although sometimes it was hard to say that a specific ceramic piece, for instance, was not fine art; however, if it was ceramic and not bronze or marble, we considered it admissible. The whole purpose for the project, was to stimulate, through the twelve museum exhibits, the importation of Italian craftworks - *artigenato* into America, and so assist the craftsmen and improve the dollar position without competing with American industry.... I'm no traitor to mass production, which enables Americans as a whole to enjoy far better and better designed products and many more of them, than are available to the mass of Italians, but a designer couldn't help but be delighted and stimulated by the daring *tours de force* his Italian colleagues could indulge in at will.³⁵

In this sense, reinforcing and strengthening trade exchange between the two countries was important for the Americans and the Italians, but at the same time Italy was offering America an equivalent. That is, the exhibition was an example of a national approach where the individual design symbolised the creativity of a country. On the behalf of Italian architects, the amalgamation of art and industry was a conscious effort in stimulating economic growth and prestige for Italian design. By synthesising past and present/future the object

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³⁵ Teague, W.D. 'Italy at Work: record of a journey' in *Interior* vol. CX n. 4 1950, New York, p. 146 - 194.

gained uniqueness which was to become a stimulus for export. With his work the Italian architect engaged the object in a complex setting of relationships where personal preoccupations, cultural and artistic heritage were used as to give an identity to the place and serve as a symbol for the client.

3.1.4

Plastics and colours used in Italian design

The article, 'Modernità di forma, modernità di sostanza' (1951) in *Domus*, argued that modernity was not only a matter of technical possibilities but equally a matter of attitude.³⁶ An attitude that looked for honesty and sincerity similar to what Ponti outlined later in 1954 when explaining his way of thinking for the lavatory units for the firm Ideal Standard. Defining the terms, modernity within forms depended on fashion and personal views. Its outcome was therefore debatable, and in reality quickly out-of-date and superseded. The modernity within materials was more secure, effective and undebatable. It involved modernity within customs, modernity linked to use, purpose, utility and, technical production. Its function was two-dimensional; the method of which certain procedures and materials were constructed, and the scope within which they were employed. Furthermore, the article argued that all materials derived from nature. There was nothing artificial on earth because from natural elements (employed by man with chemical and physical procedures: combinations, heat-and cold-treating, compression etc.), one made new, natural materials. Many of these new materials were known under the false pretence of the exterior, resulting from the rather cheap commercialism, that is, imitation. Plastic material had been used to imitate wood, leather, fabric, ceramic, glass, etc., while its true quality transcended and exceeded enormously that which it tried to imitate. It was this fundamental error embedded in imitation that led to the contrast between natural materials (as original, genuine, true) and artificial (imitations). With lamination of high pressure, Formica, for example, consisted of diverse qualities; brilliance, fire resistance, rigidity, dimensions and colours, that no other material in nature possessed. A product made of this material with these qualities would serve to elevate taste. Creative individuals, architects and furniture-makers had to proceed not only with faith but had also to adopt these new materials with enthusiasm. They would create new forms and aspects characterised by neatness, linear exactness, that is, elements leading to greater purity. This was the first indication in *Domus* that plastic being a material which opened up new design opportunities. Simultaneously mouldable, pliant and able to have any desired colour, plastic was to be considered a true material just as wood, steel or glass. A change of attitude was needed in order to accept this innovative use of the material. Until 1951, *Domus* showed only plastic furniture and objects for the toilette, a chemical laboratory, the 'perfect

³⁶ 'Modernità di forma, modernità di sostanza' in *Domus* n. 261, 1951, pp. 58 - 59.

elegance' of the kitchen, a bathroom and ship's cabin, some of which were also shown at the IX Triennale (1951) in the section displaying plastic production. [fig. 42a,b] The review in *Domus* of this section reiterated the uniqueness of the material, the new colours and beauty that none of the natural materials were able to equal.³⁷ As a totally man-made material, it was an expression and a proof of the modern technological progress of our times. Plastics should equally be accepted for the way of life, domestic landscape and architecture in general. It was not to be considered a sign of deterioration but on the contrary, of progress. Later in the 1950's, plastics were further promoted for products, giving a new meaning to the label 'made in Italy'. The marketing of colour in design was particularly relevant in that context because its expressiveness was tied to the material itself. In 1954, *Domus* showed an image of a modern kitchen where new, brightly coloured plastic items produced by Kartell (in America and in Milan) entered kitchen design and planning.³⁸ [fig. 43] The company was famous for its production of small domestic objects such as fruit-squeezers, washing-up bowls, buckets, dust-pans and brushes. These were all in bright colours or transparent, and the forms "pleasant for the eye". From this representation rose a new feeling for household work as the utensils were elevated to art and cleaning was a sign of a certain life-style and status. Moving closer to the 1960s, it was actually a general development in the Western world and a sign of social well-being to be able to have the wife out of the labour market although she did not necessarily do the domestic tasks herself. It was very common to have a servant who lived in the house which allowed the wife to live at leisure.³⁹ Ettore Sottsass also encouraged a playful use of this material for the domestic landscape in his small trays by inserting different colours and designs into the plastic material as a means of decoration. In his article in *Domus*, 'Decorazione su laminati plastici' (1956), Sottsass saw these examples as a new form of taste and a pleasure of a "sign", expressive of itself. [fig. 44a,b] They were a play of coloured signs in all variety of forms (one could say symbols) which the artist arranged.⁴⁰ Other innovative results designed from plastic materials were lighting designs by Gino Sarfatti for Arteluce. His table light manufactured in 1954, had an adjustable PVC shade balanced on the metal base that allowed the light to spread in a number of different directions. It thus served double roles; to give a defused, sensual light and to allow the material to express its potential through shape, colours and lightness. The great potential of this material lay in its inherent qualities. Remarks described the products as innovative, modern, and beautiful, which also placed the

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³⁷ 'Elogio dell'artificiale' la sezione delle materie plastiche alla IX Triennale - Allestimento Angelo Mangiarotti arch. - Ordinamento: Giampaolo Valenti arch. in *Domus* 263, 1951, p. 13, followed on p. 60.

³⁸ 'Colore e funzionalità dei materiali plastici nella casa' Prodotti Kartell, Milano in *Domus* n. 290, 1954, p. 74 -75.

³⁹ For further see; Forty, A. (1986) *Objects of Desire. Design and society since 1750*. Thames and Hudson, London. Especially the chapter 'Labour-Saving in the Home'.

⁴⁰ Sottsass, E. 'Decorazione su laminati plastici' in *Domus* n. 316, 1956, pp. 54 - 58.

'object' within the arts, more than celebrating industrial methods of mass-production .

The way in which Italian architects used colours (in practice and in theory) as a corporeal element in design and able to express the nature of the 'object' was part of the rhetoric about 'italianità'. The theme of the first conference organised by Istituto Nazionale del Colore in Padova (1957) was 'Il colore nell'ambiente umano' (colour in the human environment). Participants included; Gio Ponti, who argued in 'Il colore nella vita moderna' that colours were one of the expressive qualities inherent in materials; Ernesto N. Rogers made a historical reference to the importance of colours, in 'Colore nella casa', as well as arguing that colours had to be harmonious both inside and outside the home and to create a harmony which one breaths; and Marco Zanuso believed, in 'Il colore nell'industrial design', that the attitude towards colours in industrial design had changed with the increased participation of the consumer. No longer part of a mass market, the consumer demanded products fulfilling individual needs and desires that affected the image of the product. Articles appeared both in *Domus* and *Stile Industria* that encouraged a change from what Ettore Sottsass called the Calvinist functional approach in design and architecture based on the non-sensorial.⁴¹ *Stile Industria* published an initiative made by the car producer, Duce-Montecatini, where he invited the artists, Grossi Bordoni, Pantaleoni, Ballocco, Di Salvatore, Prampolini, De Fusco, Monnet, Mesciulam and Munari to make colour compositions and paint them on cars. The page layout of the article, written by Bruno Munari, reinforced the monotony of the grey colour against the gaiety of the bright bird photographs. In black and white, a photograph showed cars in line as in a car park of a manufacturer, all of the same model and perfectly spaced. A parrot and various birds depicted below, demonstrated distinctive elements which contrasted with the example of the car. Namely, the colours of individual birds distinguished them from other members of the species. [fig. 45] A caption for these images stated the symbolic meaning of colours;

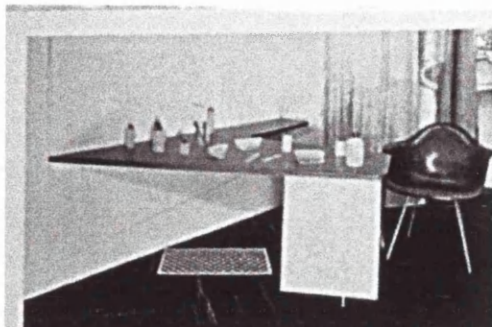
[In the same way as] the grey monotony of our cities, the cars look like they are made out of mud. Grey is the colour of boredom and of sadness. We also take, this time, an example from Nature. We stop with pleasure, to look at the wonderful colours of the birds, the aerodynamic animals like the car...⁴²

Colours were considered to be an element which helped to make a product personal. They gave a certain identity that distinguished the object from the norm but their effect was relative to many things as Ponti was to point out in 'Perchè presentiamo una centrale elettrica' (1954). They depended on: the

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⁴¹ From a conversation between Ettore Sottsass and the author of this thesis in Milan, April 1996.

⁴² Munari, B. 'Una iniziativa della Duce-Montecatini' in *Stile Industria* n. 2, 1954, p. 33.



Modernità di forma, modernità di sostanza

Una modernità

La modernità di forma è propria e soggetta alla moda ed all'opinione personale che può denominare sia il valore temporaneo presente quanto le dottrine o ideologie scientifiche dell'ultimo: è un fatto discutibile, e nella realtà è rapidamente superata e, superata.

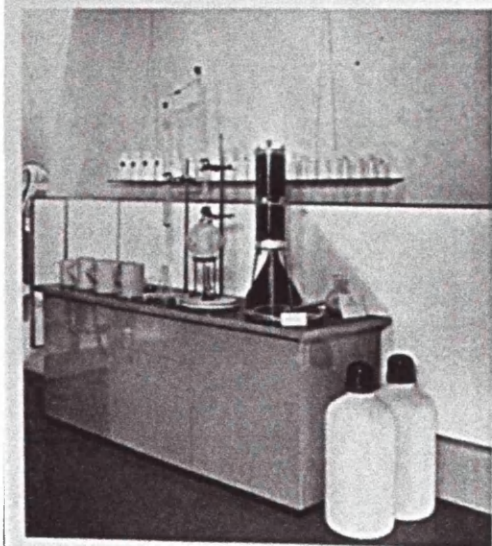
La modernità di sostanza è invece più sicura, è effettiva, è indiscutibile.

Ecco la sua modernità di sostanza, è una modernità vera: collegata all'uso, alla destinazione, alla funzione, infine alla tecnica produttiva. La sua funzionalità è duplice: è il metodo nel quale certi procedimenti e certi materiali sono prodotti, e lo scopo per il quale sono impiegati.

Tutto ciò presuppone per impostare la presentazione di quelle nuove materie che sono il frutto della tecnica produttiva d'oggi.

Industria moderna e scienza

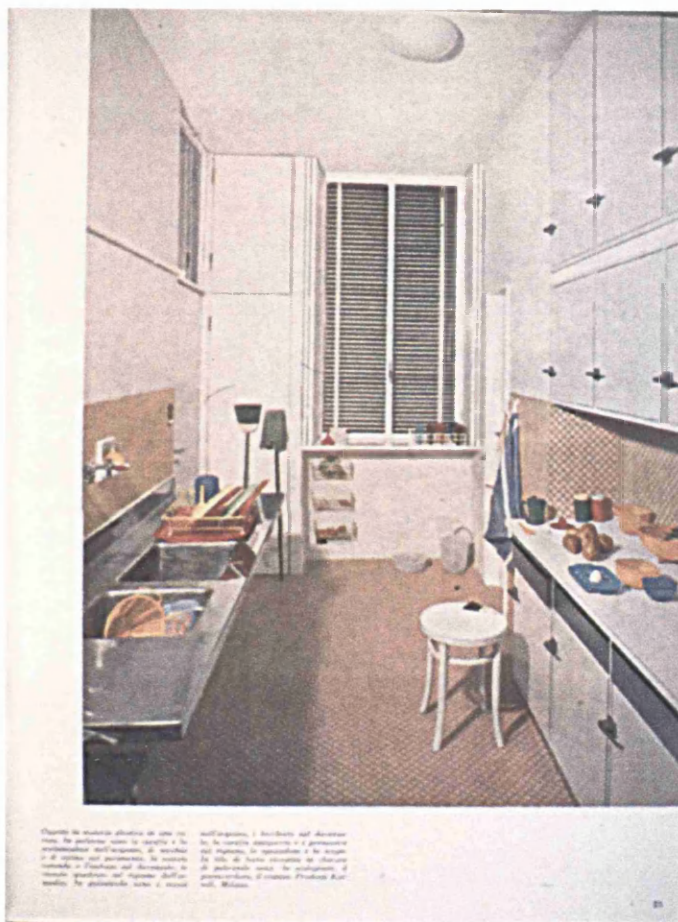
Esiste una distinzione necessaria per individuare materie nuove presentate ed apparsi in tutte le loro qualità in natura (cioè con linguaggio moderno industriale) e scientificamente o dalla natura (quelli ad esempio il legno, il marmo, i vari metalli ecc.) e materie non o apparenti o in natura. Le prime sono dette « materiali », le seconde « artificiali ». Ma queste ultime non potrebbero essere facili delle materie naturali che danno loro origine: quindi per esse l'attributo di « artificiali » è un attributo fondamentale. Nella di architetture sulla base, tutta è naturale. Ma se si mostra l'industria di ap-



to altre rigate e tabelle da usare con precisione, insieme a « chimica » (oggetti chimici) presentati in ogni caso in « chimica » e presentati dal collettivo del l'impresa nel laboratorio di chimica. Fatti e materiali (materie di natura che in natura) in questi (oggetti) sono in natura, chimica.

Fig. 42a.- 'Modernità di forma, modernità di sostanza' *Domus* n. 261 (1951).
The opportunities of the plastic material were unique. No other material possessed such multiple qualities and flexibility in itself while offering a 'modern' way of life and an elevation of taste.

Fig. 42b.- 'Modernità di forma, modernità di sostanza' *Domus* n. 261 (1951).



Ospizio di studenti giovani di una casa
nuova. Le pareti sono in stucco e la
arredatura nell'angolo, di stucco
e il letto nel corridoio. In mezzo
cammino c'è l'armadio con il comodino
in mezzo quadrato del dipinto dell'ar-
redatura. Le poltrone sono in stucco

nell'angolo, i sedili nel corridoio
in stucco dipinto e i poltroni
nel corridoio, in stucco e la sedia
in stile di stucco dipinto in stucco
di poltrone con le sedili, il
poltrone, il letto. Profilo Ruc-
cell, Milano.

Fig. 43.- 'Colore e funzionalità dei materiali plastici nella casa' *Domus* n. 290 (1954).

The establishment of plastics as a modern material that represented modern life was a recognised contribution in making Italian design known abroad.

Decorazione su laminati plastici

Stefano Bontade

È di produzione italiana un nuovo laminato plastico, l'Albergo, che, nel quadro generale, mette insieme colori diversi e disegni. Si apre così la possibilità, anche per questo nuovo materiale e per la serie, della decorazione. Questi motivi ne rappresentano una forma nuova che sia, si potrebbe dire, nel gusto e nel design, l'elemento del segno e l'impressione di per sé solo, gioco di segni colorati, in tutta la varietà di loro (e) più dove di solito di cui l'artista può qui disporre.



Stefano Bontade

Qui sotto: tavole con motivi di linee, segni, simboli e disegni: i colori sono di colore produzione italiana. Bontade è il design, allegria per piano di lavoro.



The composition of the trays on the page opens up for the imagination of the reader to play the game of identifying signs and their possible meanings - finding parallels to a Japanese garden, a pavement, anatomic cell, abstract painting, etc.

Fig. 44a.- 'Decorazione sui laminati plastici' *Domus* n. 316 (1956).



Fig. 44b.- 'Decorazione sui laminati plastici' *Domus* n. 316 (1956).

— *identifying Julia Rose-Bastrop*

I progetti pubblicati in queste pagine non sono
tutti quelli che gli autori hanno presentato; per
trovarne per ragioni tecniche non è stato pos-
sibile pubblicare i documenti di Veronesi, Ruggieri,
Caracciolo, D'Amelio, Di Salvatore, Minicchi, Gi-
lombi, Santolucito. Tutti possono essere stati
esposti al XXXV luglio dell'Automobile di To-
rino per conto del Settore Dazio della Società
Motoristica.

Dante Manno



Una griglia illustrativa delle specie più comuni della foresta amazzonica. In alto a sinistra, un piccolo uccello giallo e nero. In alto a destra, un grande pappagallo rosso e blu. Al centro, un uccello marrone e bianco. In basso a sinistra, un toucan. In basso a destra, due uccelli scuri con parti bianche.

[illegible]

Fig. 45.- 'Una Iniziativa della Duco-Montecatini' *Stile Industria* n. 2 (1954).
The serial produced grey colour for all cars is selected for technical and economic reasons while variations of colours correspond to a choice and in that way the car becomes more a personal vehicle.

relationship between man and the machine, on how people related to them bearing in mind that they were in continuous contact with each other in the sense of looking and being looked at; and finally, on the formal relationship with fantasy and culture.⁴³ For him, the joy of colours expressed "the internal delight of architecture". He presented a theoretical demonstration on the necessity of colour, stressing the gaiety of colours and their material substance. Colours were a fountain of pleasure, gaiety and joy. He recalled a visit to Rio de Janeiro experiencing nostalgia for the XVIIIth century architecture of the city, and remembering also the city's red walls and natural style and the more recently painted blue and yellow old houses of the Brazilians. As in the work by Oscar Niemeyer, the joy of colours had to express the internal delight of architecture, and create forms that were an inspiration in itself for architecture. In that way, the colour appeared as a happy material and did not seem introduced afterwards, or something added. For Ponti, Le Corbusier's *L'unità de habitation* was contrary to this way of thinking. The admiration and devotion to this work was not in terms of joy. It was rather serious and solemn, a monument. It was not resolved as a joy for the eye and spirit, not even with the colours of the balcony. These colours appeared as projecting a theoretical joy of colour. Almost as if one had tried to visually interpret the syllogism: if colours are joy, applying colours into architecture makes joyful architecture. But this was a formula, Ponti believed, and not a feeling. Joy could not be an artificial element, neither could it be substituted nor introduced with a technical device or with an application, nor claimed to be a celebrated illusion. It was a natural feeling, a light happiness that still was missing in much of the modern architecture that one wished to see more spontaneously happy.⁴⁴ As in architecture, colours signified joy in objects that inhabited man's environment; at home (i.e. upholstery, domestic utensils), work (i.e. typing machines) and in the street (i.e. cars). Colours had a spiritual value that affected the mood of people. It was evident from the various articles and direct expressions during the 1950s, that one of the roles for architects was to create a joyful environment where small objects were conceived on the same level as whole buildings. In fact, as presented in *Domus*, the play of colours that filled an interior space were part of understanding the space. With colours chosen according to the function of the space, the user of the flat was provided with a visual experience of borders and limits, and was led from one room to another. This could be found in articles such as: Sottsass, E. 'A Milano' in *Domus*, n. 296, 1954 where expressiveness, more than in the actual architecture, was searched for in the colours and also how the old furniture was inserted into a new setting; 'Pareti colorate, disegni nel pavimento' Roberto Menghi, arch. in *Domus* n. 314,

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⁴³ Ponti, G. 'Perchè presentiamo una centrale elettrica' Centrale termoelettrica S.I.P. a Chivasso. M. Passandi, G. Levi Montalcini, P. Ceresa, architetti. in *Domus* n. 294, 1954, pp. 1 - 7.

⁴⁴ Ponti, G. 'La "gaité artificielle"' in *Domus* n. 286, 1953, p. 1. In the following year Ettore Sottsass stressed the importance of colour by making a historical reference to its usage in *Domus* n. 292 and n. 299, both in 1954.

1956, is one example of many where the reader was taken around the reviewed flat by means of colours having a material quality; and, in 'Prima dell'arredamento' Vittoriano Viganò arch. in *Domus* n. 347, 1958, colours took on a material quality and seemed to be part of the structure of the building and the actual material of the walls. It seemed then that a colour had the property of a physical material, and could affect the various artistic disciplines depending on the emotional value attached to it. When Sottsass wrote about *Art Nouveau* in *Domus* (1954), he argued that besides its discovery that structure integrated form and society, colours made a plea to structure. They had to be seen as materials. In closed zones they stretched out like plates, and were restricted to a complexity of dark lines in precious stones. They became precious stones because they did not have to be anything else than structure. That is, pure materials that came closer and formed a link with other materials. In this way, Sottsass maintained, the colours used in *Art Nouveau* were always enamels, ceramic or glass. When possible, materials that had a colour were used and not ones that were coloured.⁴⁵ He developed his ideas about colours, later in the same year, showing that throughout history colours had been used and thought of as an integrated part of structure right from the time of the painted Parthenon. His ideas drew upon the sculptor Antonio Pevsner who believed that colour could be born and adhere to a structural imperative. That is, structure had to be subordinated to colours, which were no longer added, integrated or, decorative. Instead, colours had to be intense, like the essential reality and make an impact on the environment and architecture. An equilibrium between colours and structure existed, delicate, yet at the same time violent, where one and the other could be seen as independent. Existing in such a tension they integrated without providing a solution for a continuity. Sottsass argued that architects had to find this equilibrium again in order to give architecture back its complete function whether by natural means, new symbols or, with new functions.⁴⁶

Plastics and colours added a further depth to the debate about how to strengthen Italian design abroad and what could identify it with its nationality. The architects' treatment of plastics, insisting on their true and natural qualities, resulted in an unprecedented design on the international market. The way of thinking about colours as a tool for understanding space, a symbol of joy, or a structural element in itself, was also a strong factor in the concept of 'italianità'. The expressive nature of the object revealed itself to a large extent through colours, either inherent in the object or painted, a fact that encouraged Italian design to think of materials and colours as integral part of each other.

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⁴⁵ Sottsass, E. jr. 'Liberty: la bibbia di mezzo secolo' in *Domus* n. 292, 1954, p. 46.

⁴⁶ Sottsass, E. jr. 'Struttura e colore' in *Domus* n. 299, 1954, p. 48.

3.1.5

A cultural synthesis contextualises the design product

In order to identify and evolve the concept of 'italianità', architects needed to know tradition and to have mastered a methodology that showed its results in the finished form. As Aldo Rossi was to point out in the article 'L'ordine Greco' (1959) in *Casabella continuità*, lack of interest in history was always a lack of interest in technique, because unawareness of the former always corresponded to a lack of interest in the creative aspects of the latter.⁴⁷ [fig. 46] By having a basic knowledge of 'téchne', the architect would then be able to create a tension and a dialogue between the past and present which would add to the myth of 'italianità'. In the article, "'L'uovo ha una forma perfetta...'" (1996) in *Ottagono*, Giampiero Bosoni showed how anonymous design had been influential in design theory and had even been recognised as having a value as an archetype.⁴⁸ He used Vico Magistretti as an example of one who had referred to anonymous design in the context of an anonymous tradition. That is, for Magistretti the origins of the objects served as a kind of an archetype and a symbol for a cultural synthesis. His idea of concept design was expressed in the inclination to go beyond visible reality. He stated,

I love objects of anonymous tradition. Because these objects are extraordinary in their very anonymity, in their capacity to repeat themselves in time with slight differences, in their resistance to conceptual wear and tear. An oar is an oar. It is very difficult to design it in a different way. (...) My interest is never of a stylistic kind, it is always conceptual, towards objects which summarize the effort made by man to deal with nature, to overcome the force of gravity, to gain space.⁴⁹

For Magistretti, the term re-design became a cultural commitment. This is demonstrated by a passage in a short essay he wrote in the *Paesaggio del design italiano 1972- 1988* (1991) where he made an explicit reference to Rogers's term of 'pre-esistente ambientali' and connected it to product design:

... my interest focuses on the opportunities, as an European, to not forget history and to make re-design by borrowing old models, so as not to let them die, as an endangered species, models which, revived and altered for our use, become another thing and bring back to the present a memory which might be lost, thus enacting, as in architecture, a particular attention to

⁴⁷ Rossi, A. 'L'ordine greco' in *Casabella continuità* n. 228, 1959, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Bosoni, G. "'L'uovo ha una forma perfetta...'" in *Ottagono* n. 118, 1996, p. 34 - 41.

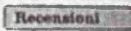
⁴⁹ Magistretti, V. 'Sketching: my search for insight', in Vanni Pasca (a cura di) *Vico Magistretti - l'eleganza della ragione*, Idea books, Milano, 1991.

Modernity lay in going beyond the archetype itself (anonymous design) by adjusting, or interpreting, it for a contemporary society. The architect followed a method, derived from Gropius's all-embracing modernist tradition, and as well he tried to meet the demands of human nature and posture. Expressive qualities of materials (glass, wickerwork, ceramics and wrought iron) were not meant to be the focus of attention but rather to add to a recognition of the past, as had been the case with Franco Albini and Franca Helg's "Margherita" armchair from 1950, manufactured by Bonacina. Modern in its form and yet very traditional in its use of cane as a material, it represented the twin pulls of the future. His later armchair 'Fiorenza' from 1955 also bore witness to this need to approach reality in its cultural setting of transition, a half-way between the old and the new. It set out to obtain the maximum aesthetic results for objects, subject to a profound renovation and simplification of the traditional use of wood in a very up-to-date manner. The chair also played on fantasy in the way that it was as if it appeared in a human form. The open arms, starting at shoulder length, and resting on a wooden spine, seemed to invite the sitter to complete the position by placing a head on 'its body'. The body itself was represented by the deep coloured fabric of the upholstery which gained a material consistency.

The crafted object had a strong tradition in people's homes but a way to stimulate the transition towards using machinery for producing home products was to stress the need for modernity and to be modern. In his first editorial in *Stile Industria*, Rosselli argued that new materials and techniques created a new beauty in the same way as the craftsman of earlier ages had achieved. It was a matter of educating people about the value of this new beauty, they had to learn to appreciate and to be willing to use industrial methods in order to generate quality products. He maintained that

... in past centuries, when production was entrusted to the work and capacity of a craftsman, whose work summed up the experience of a technician and that of an artist, the result perfectly represented that unity. It set the example of an admirable matching of technique and art, utility and beauty. Today we look at these works as if at works of art, forgetting that the reality was that of a common, serial production, concluded within the limits and possibilities of the techniques and markets of those times. The cogency and beauty of their products have led people today to treat as an exception what was in those days

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⁵⁰ Cited from Bosoni, G., Confalonieri, F. G. *Paesaggio del design italiano 1972 - 1982*, Edizioni di Comunità, Milano, 1988.



Extrait sur le graphisme d'après photographies
de Sulpice Maubron, collection "Les ma-
gnifiques" créée par Claude Arthaud.
Arthaud ed., Paris, 1978.

L'ordine greco

zio, a mio parere una notevole ingenuità. Per convincermi della stessa ingenuità l'ho fatto leggere dalla mia stessa sorella, e poi lei, che per un verso non può non saggiare i miei interessi e per l'altro della Chiodi e di Maggi del Belfio, io so, lei, la mia madre non sono più che il diavolo che esce dal cappone e prima che possa analizzarlo, io lo inghiottisco accondiscordando a Tassi perché lei, il generale del piano, io, un qualche più generale di colore. Ed ora ecco il colore, che lei, il diavolo non può più generare e che il generale ottiene, di molto più di cosa io, che ringhiando non, inghiottito nelle tenebre, non si fa nulla, in presenza, peraltro, di Tassi e ogni fatto atteso dalla Chiodi, non scappa. A questo spirito facile e disinvolto con cui è concepito il mio, ecco l'ipotesi che non si fa nulla.

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Fig. 46.-'L'ordine Greco' Casabella continuità n. 228 (1959).
Historical awareness encourages new techniques and interpretations of history. The 'new' builds upon the past regardless of knowing its author.

the norm, and to overrate the value and meaning of those objects, forgetting even their practical significance.⁵¹

Rosselli believed a method for industrial design had existed for a long time and, in fact, was inherent in the way in which craftsmen had thought about technical solutions. But in the context of contemporaneity, he continued, architects were looking for a new synthesis of practical and human, technical and aesthetic, productive and qualitative values. Rosselli appreciated the search for a type that would be aesthetically beautiful and efficient for its utility. The norm and type would be contextualised within its particular sphere of application. The peculiar national characteristics of the product would lie, for example, in the different utensils needed for domestic use particular to Italy. This importance laid upon the past as a source for design defended the cultural heritage as a building component. Many of those who wrote about the value of a modular system, standardisation, and prefabrication in *Domus* and *Stile Industria*, justified them from an ethical and social criteria. Benefits of increasing productivity were secondary to focusing on pedagogical and moral aspects. An identity was to be given to the product that lay in the cultural background of the user himself. There was a certain psychology behind the creation of forms and objects which should derive from the sensory and not only the functional side of man. The value of respecting craftsmanship and anonymous design lay precisely in the architect's commitment to create a relationship between the object and man himself. It was this fusion of subjective and objective relationships that appealed to many Italian architects as a methodology, finishing in an end product that showed a right relation between materials and technology, between means and the use of those means and, could be described as beautiful.

3.1.6

Entering into the realm of industry, the architect emphasises this lasting effect of design

Enriching the debate around the binomial, utility and beauty, Rosselli tried to show in *Stile Industria* that there was a great need for a reinforced relationship between production, design and culture, meaning tradition of design, way of living, aesthetic sensitivity and equilibrium. In his article 'Incontro alla realtà' (1955), culture was described as a rich source of inspiration. It created new ways of designing that affected production, and led internal forces to kindle a new attitude towards industry. Additionally, culture set up human and natural standards that one followed when judging the beauty of an object and determining the value and prestige of the object.⁵² What mattered was the relationship of the object with its cultural setting. Within

⁵¹ Rosselli, A. 'Disegno: fattore di qualità' ibid. p. 1.

⁵² Rosselli, A. 'Incontro alla realtà' in *Stile Industria*, n. 3, 1955, p. 1.

that context, an article by Ettore Sottsass appeared in *Stile Industria* in 1954 which focused on the folkloric imagery printed on wrapping paper for oranges. [fig. 47] Examining the symbolism behind the images on the paper, he made a study on the psychological effect that they produced and observed their signification. The wrapping paper and its imagery was part of the everyday life of the citizen and symbolised everyday culture. Sottsass analysed a history of myths and symbols that decorated the orange paper. It was a history of colonisation, victory, religion, etc.,

... where the excitement is found in the pure and noble forms of existence, where the Arts border on goodness, the physical strength on love, children to nature, the animals to the Eternal Father and so forth ...⁵³

One reads the image as it were a text. It was a narrative that exposed the meaning of the wrapping paper as well as rendering that reality to the user. Drawing out latent meanings of everyday life was part of the design process constituting society and history of the place. Consumer products were therefore not thought of as short lived but had stronger cultural ties and created a 'lived experience'. Ernesto Rogers drew up this complexity of the object in his editorial, 'Appello!' (1954) in *Casabella continuità*,⁵⁴ and argued that it consisted of a network of relationships, between the modes used in the productive circle and the finished form, as well as being within the realms of the arts. This co-operation between art and industry involved most of the individual and collective behaviour of the consumers because the outcome was based on a network of relationships between quality and quantity with respect to man and his subjective consciousness, time and space. The writer, Franco Fortini who had been a contributor to the periodical *Il Politecnico*, added to this debate on human measurement in his article 'Disegno industriale' (1954) by placing the mode of production, and the machine itself, close to human contact. He argued that the workers became a production of relations on account of their complex movements demanded by the machine, rest, strength, times, and timetable. For this reason, forms and colours were important for the various aspects of man's living habits. The machine that the worker operated, the bottle that he drank from, the packet of cigarettes he took from his pocket, the ticket for the tram with which he returned home after having been to the cinema, or the motor scooter were all equal aspects of the "conscience of the world", which just like the arts, were founded on human relations. One therefore had to ask oneself what were the proposals for living that derived from American and Italian industrial design. The whole circle of

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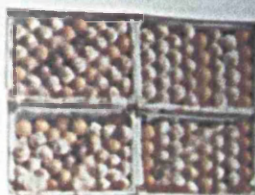
⁵³ Sottsass jr. E. 'Grafica popolare' in *Stile Industria* n. 4, 1955, pp. 35-37. Sottsass commented on this article in a conversation in Milan (April 1996), pointing out that this kind of article about orange wrapping paper he had found inappropriate in a magazine about industrial design. Rosselli had however accepted him as looking at the vernacular as a product of art.

⁵⁴ Rogers, E. N. 'Appello!' in *Casabella continuità* n. 203, 1954, p. 2.



grafica popolare

Stefano Bazzani



La grafica popolare è un fenomeno che si è sviluppato in Italia nel corso degli ultimi anni. Si tratta di una forma d'arte che ha le sue radici nelle tradizioni popolari e che si è arricchita di nuove espressioni grazie all'apporto degli artisti contemporanei. La grafica popolare è un fenomeno che si è sviluppato in Italia nel corso degli ultimi anni. Si tratta di una forma d'arte che ha le sue radici nelle tradizioni popolari e che si è arricchita di nuove espressioni grazie all'apporto degli artisti contemporanei.

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Orange wrapping paper is something which often goes unnoticed by the user yet its illustrated imagery is highly symbolic of mythical stories that once were part of people's real life.

Fig. 47.- 'Grafica popolare' *Stile Industria* n. 4 (1954).

industrial production, including concepts, methodology, the worker, and production, were part of an ideology.⁵⁵

The cultural context of the object determined the product in its widest sense, from a small hand gesture to the economic policy of the country. In a world conference on design in Tokyo in 1960, Rosselli argued that apart from dealing with form and materials, the designer had also to be involved with economics, the actual function of the industry, and in the internal politics of the industry. Design should not be a mere consultation or a temporary intervention. It had to integrate itself into the technological process in the light of designing a production series. Communication was therefore one of the prime elements of the design process, and had to be easily received. On the world market, many voices had to be heard, each from its appropriate environment and culture, expressing the symbolism of that country.⁵⁶ The same point was taken up by Walter Landor, at this conference, although he questioned an all-embracing acceptance of rapid communication links. The ease of communication between nations and fusion of cultures had given a new impulse to the creativity of the designer but at the same time that flow could be considered dangerous. One should have an ambition in nurturing the sensitivity of design in every country, to create unique designs, new designs and forms which were in harmony with oneself and others. While the industrial designer worked for his clients, the industry, and for developing and satisfying the mass market, his duty was, Landor insisted, to leave his hand prints on the product. He had to be an artist, showing his personality and culture behind every work.

To communicate the design message, the architect went through a complex process where, in *Stile Industria*, he was encouraged to use science and a rational approach derived from Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm. The achievements at Ulm, a school directed by the Argentine design theorist, Tomás Maldonado, were focused on the contextualising and systematising of the design process in such a way that it had moved away from its 'limited' associations with art and form, to become a much more abstract and a rational discipline. The work of Maldonado was seen as one way of integrating the designer with the production system without making him totally subservient to it. This was particularly articulated in the area of what he called "scientific operationalism" which was a comprehensive term describing the rationalisation of the design process. In his lecture, 'La nuove prospettive industriali e la formazione del designer' given in Brussels in September 1958, Maldonado cited the English critic, Reyner Banham, who had made a distinction between high art and popular art and used the term styling as a

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⁵⁵ Fortini, F. (1973) 'Disegno industriale' in *Dieci Inverni 1947 - 1957. Contributi ad un discorso socialista*. De Donato editore, Bari, pp. 149 - 152.

⁵⁶ Rosselli, A. 'World design conference 1960' in *Stile Industria* n. 28, 1960, p. xviii.

matter of differentiation.⁵⁷ Banham had also written an article in *Civiltà della Macchina* in 1955 to which Maldonado referred. Summarising the argument himself, Banham insisted that

1. the use of Fine Art aesthetics in the evaluation of mass-produced goods is unjustified; 2. the aesthetics of an expendable product should themselves be transient; 3. such aesthetics cannot depend upon abstract or timeless qualities, but must depend upon an iconography of socially accepted symbols; 4. these symbols must be immediately legible, and linked to the use and nature of the product; 5. effective criticism of these aesthetics of Expandability is only likely to come from inside the Communications Industry which created the symbols and gave them currency.⁵⁸

Maldonado agreed with Banham on the point that styling represented the folkloric of one's time. One could not, however, ignore the social factors of styling that were not only linked to the form of the car. Technological changes which had affected the construction of the facade provided a necessary element for this debate. The role of the designer, he continued, was to relate reality to the practice of product design,

... we know now that theory must be impregnated with practice, practice with theory. It is impossible today to act without knowledge, or to know without doing. Operational scientific thought has by-passed the ingenuous dualism, the pseudo-problems which so worried the first pragmatist. ...

It is no longer a question of knowledge, but of operational, manipulatable, real knowledge....

The Designer... will have to operate at the nerve centres of our industrial civilization; precisely there, where the most important decisions for our daily lives are made, and where, as a result, those interests meet which are most opposed and often most difficult to reconcile.⁵⁹

For Maldonado at Ulm, the aim was to achieve an education that would synthesise or integrate the humanities and arts with the physical sciences, the

⁵⁷ Published in *Stile Industria* n. 20, 1959. The lecture was also published as 'New developments in industry and the training of Designers' in *The Architects' Year Book* n. 9, 1960, Paul Elek, London, where the quote below was taken from.

⁵⁸ Banham, R. 'Industrial design e arte popolare' in *Civiltà della Macchina*, Rivista Bimestrale Novembre- Dicembre 1955 Anno III - N. 6, p. 15. Direttore responsabile: Leonardo Sinisgalli. Proprietà editoriale: Finmeccanica - Roma. Pubblicata dal Gruppo Industriale della Società Finanziaria Meccanica "FINMECCANICA"

⁵⁹ Maldonado, T. 'New developments in industry and the training of Designers' in *The Architects' Year Book* n. 9, 1960, Paul Elek, London,

behavioural sciences and technology, to form a school of environmental design, a school of human ecology.⁶⁰ Rosselli added that it was a matter of going "beyond a teaching which excluded the critical function of the designer within industry."⁶¹ The English historian, Herbert Read had already argued in 1934 for the insertion of the designer into the factory. He stated in his book, *Art & Industry*, later to be translated by Dorfles into Italian in 1961, that

... the designers should not be required merely to produce a number of sketches on paper which will then be left to the mercy of factory managers and salesmen to adapt to the imaginary demands of the public; the artist must design in the actual materials of the factory, and in the full stream of the process of production. His power must be absolute in all matters of design, and, within the limits of functional efficiency, the factory must adapt itself to the artist, not the artist to the factory.⁶²

With an awareness of these references in relation to the industrial designer, Rosselli aimed to move the role of the architect to a more active presence within industry. That of co-ordinating different actions in the whole design process. Opening up an international debate about methods for product design, *Stile Industria* published Maldonado's lecture mentioned above, 'La nuove prospettive industriali e la formazione del designer' in 1959 and in the following issue, Rosselli invited the designers and critics; Bruno Alfieri, Reyner Banham, Misha Black, Gillo Dorfles, Ettore Sottsass jr., and Marco Zanuso to place the debate within the Italian scene of product design.⁶³ Bruno Alfieri saw industrial design spilt into two. On the one side of the coin was pure industrial design, and on the other, was an industrial design growing towards heavy forms of the baroque. According to Alfieri, only the first one could be considered industrial design while every degeneration of form led to disguised anti-aesthetics. The problem was reduced to taste, good and bad. He argued that regrettably, Maldonado had ignored the education of taste. One of the merits of the Bauhaus had been to educate the taste of the new society and prepare it for the machine age. He acknowledged however that a school like the one at Ulm was able to identify the problems of the formation of the designer as the technician of the production and as the co-ordinator of all the most varied forms of manufacturing and the use of the product. The designer became a navigator for solving problems through research of operation. Yet, Alfieri added, the basic element remained; the aesthetic concept did not necessarily lead to formalism. Beauty and aesthetics derived from a cultural

⁶⁰ Tomàs Maldonado Conferenza al Royal College of Art di Londra marzo 1965, in Gregotti V. (1982) *Il disegno del prodotto industriale*, p. 12.

⁶¹ Rosselli, A. 'L'insegnamento del disegno industriale e la realtà produttiva' in *Stile Industria* n. 21, 1959, p. 1.

⁶² Read, H. (1974) *Art and Industry, The Principal of Industrial Design*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, p. 41.

⁶³ *Stile Industria*, n. 21, 1959. 'Discussione sull'insegnamento del disegno industriale', pp. XXI - XXV.

context and at the same time, tied to artistic perception. In his response to Maldonado, Reyner Banham felt obliged to clarify his argument of 1955 which Maldonado had referred to and to rectify the Italian translation for the two mottoes that he had used, 'Few, but roses' and 'Many because orchids'. The first one, 'Few, but Roses', was an old motto used by the English aristocracy in regards to their nurseries which admitted only a limited number of children and was therefore, a matter of the élite. Converting this term into the debate about industrial design, this expression represented an attitude of dissatisfaction. Art critics and artisans of the 19th century like William Morris, believed that objects of good quality had to be rare, because they were man-made. Objects that were a pleasure for the eye had to be expensive because they were made by artists. This attitude, Banham continued, opposed the machine in favour of craftsmanship. Moving to 20th century developments, he argued that the aesthetics of the machine had been created. The machine was capable of making goods of the highest quality and beauty despite the general attitude that machine-made decoration was morally reprehensible, especially if the cost was low. Explaining the second expression, 'Many, because orchids', Banham argued it was an anti-aristocratic and an anti-traditional term. It referred to the exotic variety of orchids in South America with their remarkable forms and brilliant colours. Banham's argument, formulated after having talked to a carpenter, stressed the importance of ornament and decoration, in the presentation, and packaging in order to sell the product. The carpenter had convinced Banham that if a product had decorative elements, he would sell it faster, gain more profit and offer the client better value for money. In terms of industrial design, products deprived of ornament and uniqueness would be unpopular and sell badly. Banham adapted this expression to the concept of 'aesthetics of consumerism' (a concept used in England among the members of the Independent Group) which again led to the natural obsolescence of the design. The designer had to be seen outside the discipline of art history, merge into the aesthetic of the machine and focus his efforts to the benefit of the consumer.⁶⁴ An opposite argument had been made by Giulio C. Argan in 'Art and Production at the X Triennale' (1954) where he stated that since the designer was seen in the same framework as the artist, he had an important role in the history of culture. One must step beyond the limits of industry and technique and leap into the realm of history of art in order to understand fully the process of industrial design.⁶⁵ The research into design had shifted its emphasis in the late 1950s. Gillo Dorfles acknowledged the complexity of marketing in his response to Maldonado. He agreed that industrial design had reached the point, that mass-communication had to become a more integral part of the designer's education in the school. Recent research in cybernetics, theory of information, linguistic analysis, psychology of motivation, and symbolic logic were used to analyse

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⁶⁴ Banham, R. 'Discussione sull'insegnamento del disegno industriale' in *Stile Industria*, n. 21, 1959, p XXII.

⁶⁵ Argan, G. C. 'Art and Production at the X Triennale' in *Casabella Continuità* n. 203, 1954.

the motives for design, later reflected in the consumer. Best results would, however, only be achieved in product design by an awareness of the socio-economic and artistic-formal movements. The designer would participate in creating objects that would both be technologically efficient and aesthetically pleasing.⁶⁶ Styling included only the pleasing aspect. It was, Dorfles argued in 1963,

... a mere formal modification of a product, without any other technological or scientific reason, than to increase the 'attractiveness' and hence sales. It was equivalent to a 'beauty treatment', and used in the United States and countries, where consumerism is more advanced.⁶⁷

Described by the American industrial designer, George Nelson in his book, *Problems of Design* (1957), styling was "the illusion of a change". It was

... what most designers have to do most of the time. In a society so totally committed to change as our own, the illusion must be provided for the customers if the reality is not available.⁶⁸

This commitment to change was not in line with the cultural statement of Italian product design where the essence of the product expressed a precise and a coherent methodology. Seen through the pages of *Stile Industria*, the designer had to justify his actions according to function and utility by using the most appropriate materials, combinations of elements, simplicity and compactness. This methodology also corresponded to Bruno Munari's definition of a designer, who was distinguished from the artist and stylist in his book, *Design as Art* in 1966:

There is no such thing as a personal style in a designer's work. While a job is in hand, be it a lamp, a radio set, an electrical object, his sole concern is to arrive at the solution suggested by the thing itself and its destined use. Therefore different things will have different forms, and these will be determined by their different uses and the different materials and techniques employed.⁶⁹

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⁶⁶ Dorfles, G. Discussione sull'insegnamento del disegno industriale' in *Stile Industria*, n. 21, 1959, p XXIII.

⁶⁷ Dorfles, G.(1972) *Introduzione di disegno industriale. Linguaggio e storia della produzione di serie*, in 'glossery' p. 124. Einaudi Torino. First published in 1963 by Cappelli editore Bologna.

⁶⁸ Nelson, G. (1965) 'Obsolescence' in *Problems of Design*. Whitney Library of Design and imprint of Watson-Guptill Publications, New York. First published in 1957. p. 45.

⁶⁹ Munari, B. (1971) *Design as Art*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, p. 47 - 48. First published by Editori Laterza, Roma-Bari in 1966.

He gave form a secondary role to the product's function and utility, and argued that it only gained value within that relationship. The role of the designer inside industry was that of a participant and a co-ordinator as there were also other technicians involved in the process of production. Industrial manufacturers recognised the added value that architects gave to the products and more and more engaged well known designers in their production line and they were used as part of their marketing strategy as a device to communicate to a wider audience. *Stile Industria* was particularly interested in this change and tried to explain the whole process of design; the meaning behind production design and the functional and symbolic value of objects. Always there had to be a justification behind the form. As an editor, Rosselli tried to move away from the limited range of design luxury objects and include more functional items in the line of sanitary fittings, kitchens, water heaters, cars and machines. These artefacts were part of the environment, although their public appearance was less apparent. It meant that their design and communication had a real impact on the user, and had to be placed in a cultural context just as smaller or luxury objects. Defined by Rosselli in an editorial, 'Perchè disegno italiano' in 1959, Italian design was everything that represented an authentic expression, regardless of its size. In this way, Rosselli explained,

... Italian design appears as a totality of traditions and inventions, which defines itself in a plurality of small manifestations: in simple objects for the house, in textiles, in machines, in clothes, in furniture, in today's atmosphere that appears unitary enough.⁷⁰

Industrial design developed from methods that were rooted in culture. Rosselli's aim was to provide the product with a clear meaning and logic. As an example of the methodology, he published the entire design process of the Mirella sewing machine, designed by Nizzoli for Necchi; from sketches to the realisation of all its parts, from distribution to sales. It was a creation of an object, placed in a particular industrial, economic and psychological setting, where aesthetic concerns were equally important as those of production, and they, in turn, partially conditioned each other.⁷¹ The imagery was very selective so as to make known the specific qualities of the machine. The front of the sewing machine was shown open so that the reader could get to know its parts and composition which provided proof of its utility. [fig. 48] It not only followed the evolution of the object, but depicted various social aspects of the product. A very clear gender distinction was expressed between the hard working and unclean workers at the machinery, active in the making of the product, compared to the glamorously dressed lady who represented the

⁷⁰ Rosselli, A. 'Perchè disegno italiano' in *Stile Industria* n. 20, 1959, p. 1.

⁷¹ Asti, S. 'Disegni e produzione di una macchina per cucire' in *Stile Industria* n. 15, 1958, p. 25.

Indirizzo del progetto



Fig. 48.- 'Disegni e produzione di una macchina per cucire' *Stile Industria* n. 15 (1958).
The reader is invited to see the actual production line that creates the Mirella sawing machine; how it is produced and tested to meet with the demands of the user.

finished sewing machine as the one that every woman had dreamt about. The machine was seen as a positive element in the domestic sphere that was easy to handle, and the laborious work of mending or making clothes was now a simple task that did not involve changing into working clothes.⁷² The complexity of the role of the designer was becoming greater. He no longer had the sole responsibility for the product and could not be expected to have a full technological knowledge that served both its function and form. Hence the co-operation of different specialists emerged, between the designer and industry. When reviewing Nizzoli's new typewriter Diaspron 82, Rosselli insisted that technology could not wholly determine the form. The consumer needed to feel the designer's cultural preoccupation and aesthetic sensibility, rather than mere formal modifications. Rosselli observed that,

... though in mechanics it is not much different from preceding models, the profound revolution in the form of Nizzoli's Diaspron 82 leads to new assumptions:

- Evolution in the form of industrial products is much more rapid than mechanical changes because of market demands, and so far the designer has not been able to control this commercial fact.

- It is no longer true, as many assume, that technological factors completely determine the character of production. It is time to see that through creative research, cultural and aesthetic elements are extremely influential. The dominance of aesthetic over technical attitudes that we see today in man-made products, foretells the end of an industrial phase - it has reached its peak and now prepares for reform or even profound revolution. Nizzoli's recent experience in re-design is not personal or isolated, but a symptom of the changing premise of industrial design.⁷³

On the international scene, styling was an important design concept, especially in America and England. It was associated with obsolescence and abundance which discouraged a nostalgia for the object and diminished the value of history and tradition. At the same time obsolescence signified temporariness. The image was constantly in revision requiring an up-to-date appearance, a process which prevented the object to be allocated an appropriate place in its appropriate context. Italian designers tried to look deeper into the effects of design and its symbolism, and regard it as part of a

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⁷² Rosselli, A. 'L'insegnamento del disegno industriale e la realtà produttiva' in *Stile Industria* n. 21, 1959, Milan, p. 1.

⁷³ Rosselli, A. 'Two views that bracket today's problem' in *Stile Industria* n. 24, 1959. This is quoted from Alfieri, B. (a cura di) '1939 - 1959 Appunti per una storia del disegno industriale in Italia' in *Stile Industria* n. 26 - 27, 1960, p. 26. The text is in English and is a summary from the magazine, *Industrial Design*, n. 3 1960, New York.

cultural production, as a means of creating history and building up values. In the way that industrial design was projected through the pages of *Domus* and *Stile Industria*, Italian designers continued to insist on the lasting effect of design that would be found within culture and tradition. This effect would influence the whole life of the citizen, inside and outside the home, his means of communication, and his outlook of the city.

3.2

Design cultivates 'italianità' while responding to universal rhetoric

3.2.1

The 'ideal' beauty propagated by Max Bill

The theories propounded during the late 1940s and 1950s by Max Bill - the Swiss architect, sculptor, painter and graphic designer, and later, the first director of the Bauhaus inspired design school, Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung (1955) - were highly influential in Milan. They were published in *Domus*, *la casa dell'uomo*, *Domus* and *Stile Industria* largely because he represented the Bauhaus idea of unity between the craftsman and the intellectual, as well as between the painter, the sculptor, the designer, and the architect, and who rejected the validity of teaching specialisation.⁷⁴ In his book, *Form. A Balance sheet for Mid-Twentieth-Century Form* (1952), Bill drew a parallel between forms found in nature and those made from technological achievements. He argued that when thinking about either of them, one thought about good and efficacious forms and this led him to deduce that "form is synonymous with beauty". For Bill the same method

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⁷⁴ For further reading of the relationship between the artist, craftsman, sculptor and painter, see the chapter on the 'Bauhaus' in Banham, R. (1988) *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*. Butterworth & Co, London. First published in 1960. For a good understanding of Gropius's methods from the Bauhaus years to the 1950s, see his collection of essays - Gropius, W. (1956) *Scope of Total Architecture*. The Series, World Perspectives. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London.

applied to all design of objects, architecture and the environment in which one lived. The beauty of form was a consequence of material and purpose. One only remembered good forms, good because their function served utility. Paraphrasing Bill's argument, Alberto Rosselli, who reviewed the book in *Domus* 1953, recounted that recording forms on a balance sheet was equivalent to recreating "the best, most beautiful and the most expressive forms of our way of life". It followed that in one's mind, forms were classified according to categories; natural forms, machine forms, forms of furniture, architectural forms and urban forms. A unity of expression characterised each one of these categories which helped to define the values of 'stile'.⁷⁵ Education, Bill stressed, was the key to the institutionalisation of good modern taste. Through education, consumers would learn to appreciate the value of goods that combined functionality and modern materials with harmonious design, and creative artists would learn how to produce them.⁷⁶ "L'esthétique industrielle" was not the problem of our times, he insisted. Forms that were born and were being born, and corresponded better to real concepts of the world, were the result of an evolution of our ways of seeing the world rather than a consequence of industrial production methods.⁷⁷ A sense of sentiment, of history or symbolism had to be delimited in order to become a symbol of a new condition. Rosselli affiliated with Bill's ideas and called for an "intelligent propaganda" for industrial design where the production of parts was meant to lead to innovative composition. In one of his regular reviews on industrial design in *Domus* 1951, Rosselli wrote that there was a need for schools and a general culture to understand this method of producing components in industrial design. There would be no need to fear that abandoning the premises of craftsmanship meant a rejection of fantasy and artistic values within objects. Industrial design signified a search for new forms of art, more active and linked spontaneously with contemporary 'civiltà'.⁷⁸ Rosselli, in his first editorial of *Stile Industria* (1954), praised Bill's article 'Forma, funzione, bellezza' published in the next pages of the same issue, as a manifesto for the magazine. He confirmed that

... the quality of a product tends to identify itself with the quality of aesthetic (of form and design) which is a unity of expression of a perfect technology and attained functionality.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Rosselli, A. 'Un bilancio dell'evoluzione della forma alla metà del XX secolo: "form" di Max Bill' in *Domus* n. 278, 1953, p. 59 - 60.

⁷⁶ Bill, M. (1952) *Form. A Balance Sheet for Mid-Twentieth-Century Form*. Cited from Ockman, J. (1993) *Architecture Culture 1943 - 1968. A Documentary Anthology*. Rizzoli New York. p. 158.

⁷⁷ Bill, M. 'Form', p. 11, cited from Gregotti, V. 'Complessità di Max Bill' in *Casabella continuità* n. 228, 1959.

⁷⁸ Rosselli, A. 'Disegno per l'industria' in *Domus* n. 264-65, 1951, p. 82.

⁷⁹ Rosselli, A. 'Disegno: fattore di qualità' in *Stile Industria* n. 1, 1954, p. 1.

The unity of the product, attained in the trilogy 'form, utility and beauty', would express the desired quality of production and a meaning was given to "functional beauty". In this article 'Forma funzione bellezza', Bill outlined an aesthetic theory for the 'object'.⁸⁰ Form was defined as an abstract or Platonic ideal, which could be seen as synonymous with absolute beauty and pure functionality. It was an idea that preceded the form, and was subsequently inherent in the shape. He was later quoted in *Casabella continuità* 1959, saying that "beauty illustrates truth". In an ethical context, quality was the guarantee for a moral and social product as "we know that the ugliness of small things lead to ugliness of big things".⁸¹ For Bill, art was "the harmonic unity of the sum of all functions" and could, therefore, be present in the design of everyday useful objects. All works of art had a mathematical foundation based on geometric structures and distribution. The strong tie between mathematics and art owed its existence to the fact that mathematics was a science of relations and art expressed itself through relations. The fundamental norms of *art concret* were simplicity, clarity and harmony. They were concepts that had an ethical content of pure harmony and universality, a constructive order, and optimism.⁸² Introducing an article by Bill in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* 1946, Rogers argued that the significance of Bill's sculptures lay, not only in their harmonious equilibrium and vigorous representation but also in the decorative mark which they formed between the work and the things around when they were placed in nature or in the built environment. They were like singular characters in the centre of a moving heart.⁸³ [fig. 49] Writing in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* about how 'form' and 'object' were to be understood in the effort of making a connection between 'objects' and meanings, Giorgio Crespi argued in 'Destino degli oggetti' (1946) that born under the sign of necessity and of poetry, 'objects' maintained a constant relationship with the user by means of their 'beauty' - 'beauty' being an active virtue.⁸⁴ He maintained that man created 'objects' for his living and his needs which meant that they made an impact on our spirit and mood. Crespi gave an example of a drinking vessel, or the 'form' for drinking. Each period had produced its own, and was reflected in an 'object'. Here Crespi referred to the 'form' as preceding the 'actual object' and that it determined the link between function and the final shape. Throughout the ages 'form' was created, recreated and re-emerged continuously. It was, in fact, the creative force that man mastered; for a drinking utensil, for eating, a machine, a fancy object, or an image for an ideal world. The thinker, technology, and nature joined

⁸⁰ Bill, M. 'Forma Funzione Bellezza' in *Stile Industria* n. 1, 1954, p. 3.

⁸¹ Gregotti, V. 'Complessità di Max Bill' in *Casabella continuità* n. 228, 1959, pp. 32 - 40.

⁸² Pellegrini, A. (1974) 'new tendencies in art'. *Max Bill* exhibition catalogue, Marlborough Gallery London/Zürich. [no page number]. The writing was first published in 1966 by Crown publisher inc. in New York.

⁸³ Rogers, E.R. introducing 'La costruzione concreta e il dominio dello spazio' by Max Bill in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*, n. 210, 1946, p. 18. For another article on Bill see, Kaiser, H. "'Continuità" di Max Bill' in *Domus la casa dell'uomo*, n. 223/224/225, 1947.

⁸⁴ Crespi, G. 'Destino degli oggetti' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 207, 1946, pp. 12-17.

together to create this ideal form. The idea of the object was found in the beautiful form where one discovered these elements; the sign of the thinker (who worked within ethics rather than logic), and the natural force which he arrived at with an expert use of the material. The fundamental problem was to know how to give material shape to these ideas or 'forms', as in the case of Max Bill who believed that the arts would be able to transmit these thoughts and to make them directly perceptible.⁸⁵ In the more recent review about Italian design, the semiologist, Umberto Eco reflected on this idea of 'functional beauty' in his essay 'Phenomena of This Sort Must Also be Included in Any Panorama of Italian Design'.⁸⁶ He argued in the case of forks that designers had made them more appropriate for eating peas and meat than spaghetti by seeking to make them more beautiful and functional by shortening the prongs. For that reason designers' forks were all right in rich people's houses where more meat and less spaghetti was eaten, but not in poor people's houses. Similarly, they were unable to fulfil their role in restaurants as even rich people usually had spaghetti in restaurants, and each restaurant had its own speciality. Understood by Italian architects, design had to derive from the culture itself, the popular and the elite. The individual had a past that had to be recognised in the present whether it was in terms of the arts, ways of living or emotion, every element had to be contextualised. This made designers believe that restricting the architectural practice to universal values was inadequate to achieve 'good design' because, the object had to disclose its meaning, to be apprehended and praised by its users.

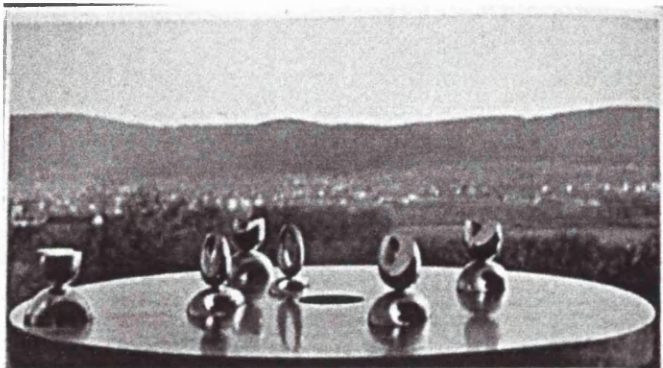
3.2.2

The 'object' seen as a concept

Assuming that an object was able to make a statement about its context and communicate its inherent qualities, meant that it was a 'concept' prior to its physical shape. The object was to be complete in itself and, in addition to having its form, line and function, it should comprise a character that was independent of any matching or compositional elements. If successful, its possibilities within the setting would be infinite and give a free reign to fantasy. It was not a problem of symmetry or asymmetry, of style or non-style, it was rather a matter of an equilibrium between a certain amount of furniture adapted to particular functions, suitably proportioned and consisting of specific characteristics in terms of line, colour, function and features. Furthermore, there was a psychological factor, or spiritual attitude, enclosed in the form of the object that affected the use of materials and colour composition. This led to the fact that simple furniture was viewed not only

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⁸⁵ Cited from Gregotti, V. 'Complessità di Max Bill' in *Casabella continuità* n. 228, 1959, pp. 32 - 40.

⁸⁶ Eco, U. 'Phenomena of This Sort Must Also be Included in Any Panorama of Italian Design' in Lumley, R. (ed.) (1994) *Apocalypse postponed*, BFI Publishing, London, p. 191.

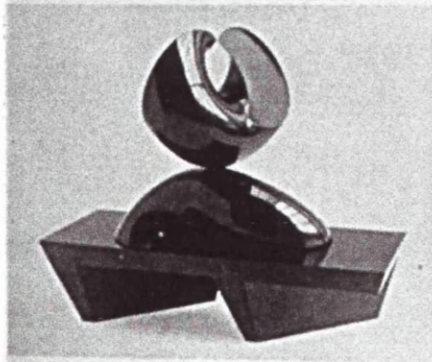


Max Bill, *L'attesa per guardare*, (1940-44).

La costruzione concreta e il dominio dello spazio

Max Bill

Max Bill, *Costruzione con un anello*, - 1940-44.



18 L'Espresso

Per illustrare Bill scrive, abbiamo pensato che il meglio era di mettergli accanto Bill scritto. Il suo pensiero agisce. Ma non è solo la sua opera, ma anche quella di altri, che ha fatto di lui un costruttore di spazio. Ma non è solo la sua opera, ma anche quella di altri, che ha fatto di lui un costruttore di spazio. Ma non è solo la sua opera, ma anche quella di altri, che ha fatto di lui un costruttore di spazio.

I suoi modelli che l'artista ha voluto dare alla sua opera non debbono essere la semplice copia di un'opera di un altro, ma la sua opera, che ha fatto di lui un costruttore di spazio. Ma non è solo la sua opera, ma anche quella di altri, che ha fatto di lui un costruttore di spazio.

Il significato di questa parola di Bill è nel suo pensiero, e non è solo la sua opera, ma anche quella di altri, che ha fatto di lui un costruttore di spazio. Ma non è solo la sua opera, ma anche quella di altri, che ha fatto di lui un costruttore di spazio.

G. S. S.

Fig. 49. *'La costruzione concreta e il dominio dello spazio' Domus, la casa dell'uomo n. 210, (1946).*
These beautiful 'rings' decorate the surrounding landscape while at the same time, educate the viewer of the ethical quality which lies in 'beauty' itself.

through its structure, but seen as a concept as was articulated in the review 'Il mobile singolo' in *Domus* n. 234, (1949) of a furniture exhibition organised by the manufacturer Fede Chetti in collaboration with twenty Milanese architects who among others were; Albini, Belgiojoso, Caccia, Chessa, De Carli, Fratino, Gardella, Latis, Magistretti, Menghi, Peressutti, Righini, Tedeschi, Vietti, Viganò and Zanuso. This ability to express inherent qualities was found in furniture by the architect, Carli De Carli, frequently cited in *Domus* in the 1950s. The expressive qualities he gave to tables and chairs were manifested in different materials, such as wood, metal, fabric, and colours. Special attention was drawn to characteristics to be found in the life of the wood; the maximum thickness of the fixed joints affirmed the designer's interest in the structure of the wood, and the trunks, and branches of a tree (alive, natural and moulded) represented nature and the 'growth' of the furniture. The tables and chairs by De Carli were illustrated as individual and free-standing objects where their positions, different viewpoints and levels reinforced their sculptural form. [fig. 50] Importantly, the action of carving and shaping material is the original meaning of the verb, to sculpt. This observation is significant since the word 'sculpture', as a piece of art, is frequently used in design terminology and later in writings about Italian design in the 1950s both in Italy and abroad.⁸⁷ De Carli explained the fascination for chairs and armchairs and argued that they were the most expressive elements of interior architecture. They were forms, or rather concepts, captured halfway between the static walls and the motions of man. They partially moulded man's movements while resting, without being completely rigid. Chairs were able to respond according to their material, and, as a result, express the customs of the time. He followed the same thoughts designing a chair or a house. The method surpassed any physical limits. The chair was "a lyrical form", just as a sculpture, which meant that the wood was carved (sculpted). In fact, this lyrical form was physically present in the wood and marble, like an iron rod that expanded little by little, losing any specific denominations. It could not be defined as specifically as architecture, sculpture, or as a work of art, leaving one to question one's sensitivity and certainty.⁸⁸ In 1953, only two years after the travelling exhibition, 'Italy at Work', furniture of this kind was chosen to exhibit Italian design abroad, at the Biennale in Stockholm.⁸⁹ The terms used to describe Gardella's furniture, for example, were poetical, emphasising rigour and precision. The precision that artists called "the fantasy of precision" incorporated elegance, play, rhythm, equilibrium, harmony, and freedom conceived in geometry. Similarly, a lyrical use of structure and materials, formal continuity, lightness and spatial fluidity were used to describe De Carli's designs that were considered to be going beyond function. The weight of the furniture, which before had been

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⁸⁷ See articles throughout *Domus*, especially by Gio Ponti. Also, Sparke P. (1988) *Italian Design 1870 to the present*.

⁸⁸ Carli, C. De 'Tavoli e sedie mobili viventi' in *Domus* n. 278, 1953, p. 33 - 34.

⁸⁹ 'Mobili italiani a Stoccolma' in *Domus* n. 282, 1953, pp. 22 - 36.

praised was now a trifle. Furniture had to, and was able to, be very strong as well as to comprise the outmost lightness, without adding or subtracting anything. Gio Ponti described his own chair from 1952 incorporating these same qualities, lightness and strength;

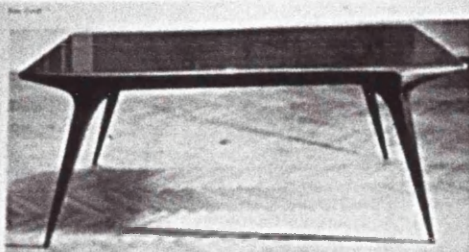
... a chair, light and strong, and, at the same time, with the right outline, and low price. A chair-chair, modest, without adjectives. That is, a normal chair with "that" quality and not a chair with adjectives (a rational chair, a "modern" chair, a prefabricated chair, an organic chair etc.). No, a chair-chair period, fine and reasonable. When it goes well - I always repeat - it goes from heavy to lightness, from opaque to transparency, from expensive to reasonable...

The moral of this moral: let's go back to chair-chairs, house-houses, to works without labels, without adjectives, right, true, natural, simple, and spontaneous things.⁹⁰

These terms, "right, true, natural, simple, and spontaneous", called for an experience that related to the objects themselves before considering how they accommodated the beholder. A direct relationship appeared between the subject and the identity of the object that proved to be 'right', 'true', etc. It was an ideal model that surpassed all others. Ponti eliminated, in this way, the more collective adjectives of the object and any discussion about the social purpose of creativity. Instead, it brought the discussion back to the wish of making the home consisting of unique objects which had an inner quality drawn out by the artist and made part of an environment consisting of 'civiltà and 'collezionismo'. Art and architecture were drawn into a single function looking for a truth which went against the belief that a clear distinction between art and architecture should prevail, a belief held by Walter Gropius and reinforced by his successor at the Bauhaus, Hannes Meyer, who confirmed that architecture was not an art but a science, a building science.⁹¹ Looking for the true form, the object was part of the environment as an individual piece having a conversation with another. The expressiveness of the object did not however only serve its purpose in that dialogue but also in its relation to the user. As with a work of art, the user was able to reflect on the object and discover its qualities and life. It signified a thought and a concept, as within the same rhetoric found in the Monument to the Fallen in the German Concentration Camps (1946), placed in the Cimitero Monumentale at Milan designed by BBPR and dedicated to the memory of known victims of the war, including their member Gianluigi Banfi, as well as, Giuseppe Pagano, Raffaele Giolli, Giorgio Beltrami and Giorgio Labo. [fig. 51] A metal framework, proportioned according to the golden section, delineates a simple cubic volume. In the centre, a second, smaller volume of

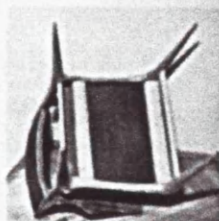
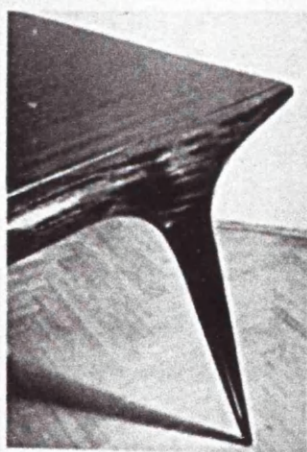
⁹⁰ Ponti, G. 'Senza aggettivi' in *Domus* n. 268, 1952, p. 1.

⁹¹ Cited from Schnaidt, C. (1965) *Hannes Meyer*. Geneva, p. 31.



una semplice e alta cosa, ridotta
a presenza del problema. Ma in
questo si dissolve la forma e la
si lascia fuori: la semplice è una
forma forte al pari di una sedia
o, al più spesso, è qualcosa che
il legno non esprime; infatti si so-
no sculture una materia dura, den-
ta, pesante, lacerante del legno
e del metallo: come di metallo di
fatti per esempio, si è però a più
o il problema si dilata, però
prima le determinazioni spaziali
che sono le architetture spaziali,
caratteristiche, se si possono
e un problema di arte, calcolato,
che coincide esattamente nelle le
sculture scultoree nel disegno.
Tutti questi modi di sculture per-
duti in arte negli Stati Uniti da
Shapiro e New York.

Tavolo di legno scuro con
sculture scure agli angoli: pezzi
di metallo, acciaio.



Sedile con braccioli in legno di
rosa scuro, con i braccioli spessi
di metallo, acciaio e metallo con
fornelli in gommapiuma.

Fig. 50. - "Tavoli e sedie mobili viventi" *Domus* n. 278 (1953).

Domus's reader is here offered views of Carli's pieces of furniture in order to observe their craftsmanship, joints and finish and to pay a special attention to their expressive qualities.



Fig. 51.- Monument to the fallen in the German concentration camp in Cimilero Monumentale, Milan (1946) by BBPR. Photograph by the author.

Through the simple cubical forms the viewer is encouraged to leap into the realm of memory and recollect the human suffering that took place within the boundaries of space and time.

the memorial reaffirmed the commitment of the BBPR studio to the design principles of the pre-war Rationalist movement - where number of elements were kept to the absolute minimum, refined and brought to maximum perfection and contained an abstract purity of rhythm. Shifting perspectives offered diverse universal expressions which reinforced its contextualism by the immediacy of the surroundings. This simple and delicate monument was in reality like a looking-glass where the viewer was set against the overwhelming solemn architecture around it, almost to the verge of oppression. In this way it was able to communicate its message of suffering in a complex way rooted in memory; a memory that was provoked by the restrictions of the cubical forms that created frames of boundaries and limits.

3.3

The relativity of the 'object' opposes absolute values of design

3.3.1

The object's ability to accommodate different functions

In relating the object to its domestic setting in the immediate post-war years, it became a subject of a research into its possible functions, that is, multiple functions that could be incorporated into a single furniture. In the article 'Situazione del mobile' (1946), Luigi Fratino explained the contemporary attitude towards furniture and urged for its true renewal in corresponding to contemporary life. Significantly, Fratino insisted that he was talking about furniture and not design, "I almost want to say a table, chair, bed, wardrobe." If furniture was to be considered as what it truly was, the initial cell of the house, then it should be clear that the reconstruction had to concern itself with both the material and conceptual qualities of the furniture. There were two ways of finding a solution according to Fratino. The first was through technological possibilities (subject to resolving economic boundaries) and serial production, and did not directly depend on the architect. The second approach depended on mankind and required a new and sincere analysis of the functions of the new synthesis of elements. That is, he explained, to invent a chair that would abolish completely the need for a cocktail cabinet or a tea trolley, an assimilated chair and armchair under the heading 'poltroncina', a front chair-with-legs holding-and-a-pipe-rack ('poltronissima-con-reggi piedi-

e-porta-pipa'), etc., because in the house there was no physical or psychological space for objects of particular function.⁹² The object became a setting for a few essential functions that before had been dispersed singularly. The traditional arrangement, however, of relating the various rooms of the house, remained more or less clear even in many of the more formally avant-garde interior designs. A sense for a new organic unity within the house was achieved by re-defining the furniture, preferring unity and elasticity within their components. The possibility of finding common denominators, useful on their own and encouraging flexibility of usage, opened up new ways for reciprocal relationships. The concept of interior design became meaningful as a unit system. This was a novel approach because from it emerged a synthesis of elements, corresponding to units rather than the whole set of furniture although this framework was not an original invention. For example, the metal unit furniture by Marcel Breuer already dated from 1926. Establishing the application of this principle was, however, considered to be precarious precisely because it tended to end up as a system, an interior design - a rigid space, opposite to its intentions. The same point was later developed in 'Elementi dell'arredamento' (1948) in *Domus* where it was argued that architects were not concerned with providing interior design but the means to carry it out, to be able to produce essential elements like chairs, tables, bookshelves, or rather individual elements, supports and shelves to assemble and combine. The arrangement was seen to be born from reason, that in presenting a composition of units logically put together. Consequently, for the majority of people, the house was considered to be transported or transportable. That is, it was not made as a home, nor was it simply an attitude. The spiritual value was transferred from the furniture, the article continued, and it became a simple and rational support for the things to which one loved - books, objects, and habits.⁹³ Within his economic framework, the inhabitant would be able to create an elastic setting with his furniture that would fulfil his immediate needs of the day and those in his future which would incorporate new situations. The way in which prefabrication was discussed in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo*, it added to the freedom within the interior layout and placed furniture conceptually on the same level as other constructed elements. It abolished any distinction between architecture and interior arrangement, i.e. wall cupboards were already a general arrangement but it also established new limits between fixed elements and furniture, and

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⁹² Fratino, L. 'Situazione del mobile' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 209, 1946, pp. 15 - 17.

⁹³ 'Elementi dell'arredamento' Oreglia, M. arch. (Torino) in *Domus*, n. 227, 1948, p. 60.

It is worth noting that the primary elements of furnishing lay in chairs, tables and bookshelves. Chairs included armchairs and divans. Bookshelves accommodated books as well as objects. Lighting fixtures were reviewed and photographed but as yet they were not noted as part of the elementary features of the house. This last point is interesting based on an observation that Paul Ginsborg made, at the lecture given by Penny Sparke at UCL in Jan. 1997, that rural houses were generally dark and poorly lit. Penny Sparke explained the obsession of Italian designers with lighting and bright colours through their own terms. It was a reaction against the traditionally dark, brown colour interior of rural houses.

between elements that were easy to dismantle and transport. Bookshelves and units became light walls and allowed fusion between spaces as in BBPR's furniture published in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* in 1947. Rogers felt obliged to explain what he considered the modern condition of Italian furniture production.⁹⁴ [fig. 52] He demonstrated with images of BBPR's own furniture, that the slow evolution of technology and taste tried to organise itself around forms that were consequent to their understanding of 'stile'. This furniture demonstrated an attempt to produce a common language capable of expressing diverse discourses, and thus represented a continuation of the thoughts that Edoardo Persico had theorised in the inter-war years. That is, as prior to the Second World War, society needed a 'stile', or commitment that unified the pluralistic and complex state that existed within architectural practice - based on tradition and familiar signs. In the post-war context, this commitment was bound to the vast and manifold problems of reconstruction. BBPR's furniture exemplified the intention of such a coherence. Elements were made out of expressive materials that produced a variety of effects according to their different composition and surroundings. As an example, Rogers argued that the same structural device was applicable to the interior of a bar and a double bedroom and hence, public and private usage. One of the characteristics of 'modernità' (this contemporary 'stile') materialised from a particular composition of materials and expressions that allowed the object to accommodate different functions. Different materials, such as maple, varnished iron, brass and walnut were set against each other in the same furniture, and silk and cotton used for tapestry and bedcovers. Each one played a part in the orchestration of textures, colours, forms and their specific natural characteristics. Furniture, shown at the RIMA (Riunione Italiana Mostre per l'Arredamento) exhibition of home furnishing at Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan in 1946, had also addressed similar problems. A group of young architects - including Ignazio Gardella, Carli De Carli, Franco Albini, Vico Magistretti and Vittoriano Vigano - displayed a range of simple furniture items made mostly of wood. These chairs, folded and stacked to meet the exigencies of the day, confronted the problems of serial production and the shortages of raw materials and small living spaces. These compact furniture items became then, a symbol of freedom and flexibility that enabled the move for regeneration. One could read from the general review of exhibitions in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* that these furniture designs were not always fulfilling the general taste of the time. Indeed, the magazine had been criticised for not publishing furniture that was to people's liking, to which Magistretti responded:

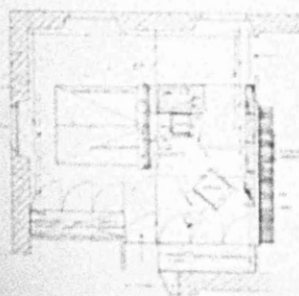
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⁹⁴ Rogers, E. N. 'Elementi d'arredamento pubblico e privato' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 222, 1947, p. 85.



Bookshelf di legno aperto.



Il tavolo chiuso.



Letto - bookshelf in casa R.

arch. H. S. P. R.

Questo ambiente, in una stanza relativamente bassa (2,10 m. circa) è diviso in due parti: a sinistra è la zona notte con letto e armadio; a destra, la zona studio, con tavolo, seggiole, libreria e poltrona. La zona notte è divisa dalla zona studio da una parete di legno, che può essere abbassata o alzata, e da una parete di legno, che può essere abbassata o alzata, e da una parete di legno, che può essere abbassata o alzata.

Plano della stanza da letto - bookshelf e della libreria, illustrato nelle pagine precedenti.

Fig. 52. 'Elementi d'arredamento pubblico e privato' *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 222 (1947).
The dividing panel between the bed and the living area has two 'facades' - one made of steel that supports the side lamp and the head of the bed, and the other of oak that supports the bookshelves and foldable table. The structure is expressive in its contrasting materials and in its novel interpretation of rounding off the edges to enclose its joints with the ceiling.

The reason is that next to mature fruits we venture to gather some unripe fruits - we rely on hope - but never on that which is rotten or already decomposed.⁹⁵

It had to take a certain risk and to believe in designs that took a stand in the political climate of the time. Apart from their economic merits, objects included an ethical dimension voiced by Eugenio Gentili in the article 'Il Mobile pieghevole' (1946), where he insisted that foldable furniture not only responded to perpetual existence but was important to man in terms of his mobility. It was not something recently invented. It had followed the customs and needs both of shepherds and conquerors and, therefore, through its dynamic life and because of the technology of 'today', it had a complete reason for being.⁹⁶ Thereby, furniture became a symbol of morality and without pretence, it exposed its mechanism and crude elegance. Fixed joints were displayed as part of the visual outlook and function which were reinforced by simple forms. For example, Magistretti's armchair, manufactured by Fumagalli in Meda (priced L. 4000) consisted of a beech wood frame and stretched canvas. Importance was given to ease of cleaning and the simple way of opening and closing, which showed the explicit interest in flexibility and portability. Furthermore, the idea of a bookcase was to hold books and that was precisely what Magistretti's bookcase stood for; two free-standing pillars supporting shelves between each other all made of individual parts. Produced by Ditta Crespi in Milan, it was formed of two steel tubes fixed between the floor and the ceiling which allowed the shelves to be adjusted freely. The pillars, which varied in height, could be applied to other functions and to support, for instance, panels for exhibitions, glass shelves, fixed or temporary divisions, etc. The prime characteristics of this furniture were lightness, economy of space in use and storage and in price, as well as using simple devices and operating systems to provide flexibility of use. [fig. 53] The novelty of Magistretti's furniture was noted abroad in late 1950. Deborah Allen, the associate editor of the New York magazine *Interior*, described this furniture as a;

... stilt-like structure which seems poised, at a moment's notice,
to waddle away on black-spatted duck feet while its black gloved
hands inch along on the ceiling.⁹⁷

This way of responding was a sign of Italian design maintaining a sense of a playful fantasy and imagination which was, however, in contrast to the mood of the time. Design aimed to help solve social problems regardless of class or the problem of taste. Taste was not a constant phenomenon and guaranteed no

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⁹⁵ Magistretti, V. 'Elementi', Ancora mobili di un'esposizione in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 212, 1946, p. 7.

⁹⁶ Gentili, E. 'Il mobili pieghevole' in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* n. 207, 1946, p. 25 - 30.

⁹⁷ Allen, D. 'Given four walls and a ceiling' in *Interior* vol. CX, n. 5, December 1950, New York. p. 106.

apparent order, or rationality, when needed in order to stabilise society at a time of crisis. Establishing a certain taste was, however a kind of identity and feeling for belonging to a class. The flexibility of basic furniture - chairs and armchairs, tables and wardrobes - were designed in enormous quantity that were all supposed to be heavily mass-produced and distributed all over the country for rich and poor people. All of them aimed to fit the vision of a new way of life. This new way of life gave precedence to the welfare of the masses, to the satisfaction of their needs, and the enrichment of their lives by industrial production. They included projects by many of the individuals who are now legendary names in the story of Italian design, such as, Albini, BBPR, the Castiglioni brothers, Ponti, Zanuso and Magistretti. But most of this mass of pioneering and prophetic work was produced in such small quantities, if at all other than the prototype, that it rarely saw the light of day. Even less did they reach the masses or the poor because of the cost. Wealthy and conservative people, attracted by antiques, craftsmanship and finesse as status symbols were also hard to reach. The remaining realm for this furniture was to appear in exhibitions and magazines.⁹⁸ The multiple meanings of the object according to its context were hard to communicate to the client. As a physical substance and an instrument of lived experience, the object was selected for publication in *Domus, la casa dell'uomo* for its expressiveness that represented an element or a slice of society. As such, it was seen in conjunction with other elements within the surroundings rather than in isolation or as autonomous. It was part of a larger context which tried to stimulate a dialogue between the ordinary, 'conventional signs', that Edoardo Persico had described in his article, 'Stile' (1930) in *La Casa Bella*;

... it was a living collaboration of all in one time - of the employee who got on to a tram in the morning, the worker who controlled a lever, a lady who would take a walk, a dandy who lit a cigarette without wanting to. 'Stile' was an expression and a way of life. One had to be attentive, not only to the stains of humidity on the walls but also of instinctive gestures like when picking up a lady's glove and noticing how a lady arranges her hair. 'Stile' is determined through a complex set of trials and consequently its creative force is reinforced and its appearance is raised to a poetic level.

'Stile' is born from sudden agreement of a mysterious plasticity rather than from a specific research. ... It is not really the material, or the wish, that determines the form, rather the secret lies in how things present themselves in reality. It is primarily a matter of an exchange of conventional signs. Only through this agreement is the form able to confirm a content that is alive.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ For further reading see Burney, J. (1991) *Ettore Sottsass*. Trefoil Publications, London.

⁹⁹ Persico, E. 'Stile' first in *La Casa Bella*, maggio, 1930, 29. Here, cited from Cuicci, G./Dal Co, F. (1995) *Architettura italiana del '900*. Electa Milano. p. 129.

Ancora mobili di un'esposizione

Continuando la pubblicazione dei mobili esposti al Padiglione dell'Arte della Biennale di Venezia, questo del padiglione francese, si desidera nell'occasione riportare un'ulteriore di quelle che la rivista dei padiglioni stranieri e la visita di alcune esposizioni parigine.



La libreria e alcuni braccioli sono inseriti a pressione tra il pannello e il soffitto; nel due montanti in ferro, a sinistra del ripiano apribile per libri, questi montanti possono essere usati anche per portare pannelli per espositore, ripiani per tavole, ecc.

Elementi

Arch. Vico Magistretti

La poltrona pieghevole ha una struttura di legno che porta una tela tesa. La tela è doppia e la tensione è ottenuta attraverso una architettura di corde. Tra le due superfici della tela, sia nel sedile che nella schienale, è inserita un cuscino di imbottitura che può essere facilmente tolto, come pure la tela, per la pulizia. Uno dei due modi della struttura, quella anteriore è libera, fissata a gancio, così da rendere molto semplici le operazioni di apertura e di chiusura della poltrona stessa.

La poltrona è prodotta in serie dalla Ditta Francigelli di Milano e il prezzo è di L. 4000.

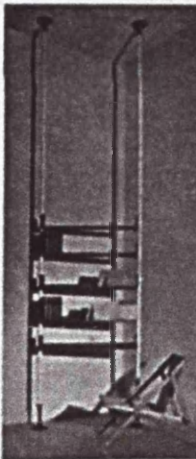
La libreria a ripiani apribili, eseguita dalla Ditta Gorgi di Milano, è composta da due montanti laterali che servono a premere tra soffitto e pavimento senza incidere ed allargare l'uno o l'altro perché la luce e la tela, in alcune posizioni, portano, nella superiore di cordone, un foglio di gomma.

La pressione che dà la stabilità al montante è ottenuta attraverso una vite inserita nella base.

Il montante, ad altezza variabile, può essere alzato, abbassato, e portato parallelamente da espansione, ripiani da vetrina, divanetti stabili e provvisori, ecc.



La poltrona è pieghevole: uno dei due modi della struttura è libero e portante, quando aperto, la poggia su dello schienale e sul sedile, che sono fissati; uno dopo l'altro nella struttura possono essere i vari del montante (Vedi disegno costruttivo nel foglio allegato).



© 1954

Fig. 53.- "Elementi", ancora mobili di un'esposizione' *Domus*, la casa dell'uomo n. 212 (1946).
Apart from their functional value and economic merits, these pieces of furniture (as they were presented in *Domus*) had a sculptural quality that was brought forward in the play of shadows and chiaroscuro effects.

Not losing hope of reaching its audience, the object tried to put into practice Rogers's trilogy, 'coerenza', 'tendenza' and 'stile' which for him defined the artistic phenomenon. By so doing the object had an ethical responsibility trying to solve the needs of the individual and offer him a flexible design that could benefit him in the present and in the future. In that way the object made a link to life itself, to the manner in which man lived and to the presentation of his culture.

3.3.2

The phenomenology of the object

In 1957 Paci wrote about the phenomenology of the object in 'l'Architettura e il mondo della vita' where he outlined a philosophical explanation for a purely subjective consciousness being at the basis for all experience, a philosophy drawn from the German philosopher Edmund Husserl who sought to describe the world which made experience and consciousness possible. Real or lived experience without prejudice was never neutral, static, or immobile. It was always fluid, temporal, and dynamic and gave a direction to our more confused sensation, or, as Husserl said, it was meaningful. A colour, in relation to other colours, a line, in relation to other lines, a mass in relation to other masses, constituted a complete experience, a whole *Lebenswelt* which encouraged a great many links, new forms and useful relationships. This only occurred, Paci argued, if one experimented in a free and unrestrained manner. In reality space and masses moved and appeared almost to be turning towards the new forms we anticipated and foresaw.¹⁰⁰ Configuring their own existence, artefacts evolved by using themselves as a point of departure. They contained the conditions for their own development. The objects' structure adapted to and moved in order to match the future conditions in which they would be employed. In this way, a sensitivity for details and parts was significant in order to recognise the whole observed in the juxtaposition of materials within the same artefact, the combination of different components and textures. Seeing things in the relation to the other and contextualising the environment - whether an object or a building - summarised the initial concept of 'continuità', that Rogers theorised in *Casabella continuità* in relation to architectural practice. Juxtaposing tradition and innovation created a meaningful modernity based on a link between past and present. The importance of relativity had always been present in the Italian debate around Rogers and explains to a certain extent the early interest in semiology which proposed that all values were relative. One of the first indications in Milan for an interest in semiotics and the meaning of symbols is found in the article 'Il significato del significato' (1951) in the magazine *Aut Aut* by its editor Enzo

¹⁰⁰ Paci, E. 'L'architettura e il mondo della vita' in *Casabella continuità* n. 217, 1957, p. 54. Published later in *Relazioni e significati III* (1966).

Paci (Gillo Dorfles was the co-editor).¹⁰¹ This was a review of the Anglo-American book, *The Meaning of Meaning. A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* by C. K. Ogden and J. A. Richards. Paci believed that the study of symbols would open up new horizons and encourage a more precise analysis of language and communication. The research into the signification of words and symbols made us more aware of the world. It brought one to question one's conscious and unconscious daily means of communication and interpretation of signs that then affected our perception of the environment. Gillo Dorfles was among the main protagonists in Italy in that research. He suggested, in the essay 'Valori semantici degli 'elementi di architettura' e dei 'caratteri distributivi' (1959), published in *Domus*, that architecture could be considered as a *sign system*: one of its tasks being to "communicate a particular message, namely the architectural message".¹⁰² [Dorfles's italics] He developed the argument in his book *Simbolo, Comunicazione, Consumo* (1962), maintaining that one was surrounded by signs that were tools of communication. The environment could therefore, be read and experienced by placing things in context to the surroundings. He argued that,

... the problems of architecture, if considered in the same way as the other arts, as a "language", are the basis for a whole new current of thought, which allows it to be treated in terms of information and communication theory; and that the meaning can be treated as a process which connects objects, events and beings with "signs", which evoke just these very objects, events and beings. The cognitive process lies in our ability to assign a meaning to the things around us, and this is possible because the "signs" are links between our consciousness and the phenomenological world. So signs are the first and immediate tools of every communication.¹⁰³

The meaning of signs was dependent on the relationship with other signs, and was therefore contextualised and belonged to a particular site. Dorfles elaborated this point in 'Structuralism & Semiology in Architecture' (1969) and wrote,

... we must determine our architecturally significant units *after* the analysis and with respect to the particular context. Otherwise we will isolate false units which reflect our own

¹⁰¹ Paci, E. 'Il significato del significato' in *Aut Aut. Rivista di filosofo e di cultura* n. 1, 1951, pp. 46 - 56.

¹⁰² Dorfles, G. 'Valori semantici degli 'elementi di architettura' e dei 'caratteri distributivi' in *Domus* n. 360, 1959, pp. 33- 34.

¹⁰³ Dorfles, G. (1962) *Simbolo, Comunicazione, Consumo*, Einaudi, Turin. Chapter V. 'Valori comunicativi e simbolici nell'architettura, nel disegno industriale e nella pubblicità' p. 180. Here cited from Dorfles's article 'Structuralism & Semiology in Architecture' in Jencks and Baird (ed.) (1969) *Meaning in Architecture*, p. 39.

This could have been an answer to the call made by *The Architectural Review* in 1960 to Gillo Dorfles when commenting on BBPR's Torre Velasca. Citing Rogers's proposal that architecture of this type went beyond the abstract schemes of the modern architectural expression giving a new kind of modernity to architecture, *The Architectural Review* asked for a redefinition of terms, because

... if this is seriously intended, and these dowdy-looking revivals of late nineteenth-century architecture are supposed to have a new kind of modernity, then Gillo Dorfles and other semantic critics of the Milanese School have some urgent work to do on the meanings of *new* and *modern*.¹⁰⁵

In the Milanese setting to which *The Architectural Review* referred, the terms new and modern were relative terms. Dorfles gave this environment the same meaning through linguistic analysis. That is, the environment is set up out of different elements similar to the way that linguistics divide words into more basic elements according to their context. The principal method of analysis was a matter of analysing the environment in order to reconstruct it. The meaning of the 'pre-existing environment', 'home' and the 'object', was a matter of establishing a language of communication which was comprehensible to a collective entity as well as the individual client. The whole of the man-made environment (from the spoon to the city) was analysed and de-coded in order to give significance to the 'subject', rather than the abstract 'object'. History was not about 'objects', but about men and human civilization that, as it were, 'objects' inhabited.

3.3.3

History, a building component used against consumerism

By the end of the 1950's, the era of reconstruction had past and the 'economic boom' was taking its first steps, aided by Italian design which then was becoming a representation of economic growth and well-being. The design concept had developed into a close contact with the architect and the user. On behalf of the architect, the object was a way of interpreting reality. Being part of that reality, designed objects had to be contextualised and seen in relation to other objects. The primary properties of the object such as, form, function,

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¹⁰⁴ Dorfles, G. 'Structuralism & Semiology in Architecture' in Jencks and Baird (ed.)(1969) *Meaning in Architecture*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁵ 'Clarification from Milan' in *Architectural Review* vol 127, n. 755, 1960 p. 2.

colour and material, affected the user's perception of other objects. Experiencing the object was a personal feeling yet, it saw itself as part of a larger collective group. Hence the architect tried to encourage an experience of differences within the whole, within the same type of things. And thus, he saw himself as the creator of a complete environment, from the collective city to the individual object. It was clear that there was no longer a lack of objects as had been only two decades before. They were rather in excess. Against this abundance rose a clear dissatisfaction among some young architects that tried to recapture a meaning for the environment and provide the object with a symbolic and communicative force that would prevent it from being reduced to a mere tool. These thoughts for furniture were conveyed in an exhibition in Milan, 'Nuovi disegni per il mobile Italiano' in March 1960, sponsored by *Osservatore delle arti industriale* which provoked an international reaction. [fig. 54] The group behind the exhibition were the younger generation of the so-called *Neo-Liberty*, and included among others; Sergio Asti, Gae Aulenti, Guido Canella, Roberto Gabetti, Vittorio Gregotti, Lodovico Meneghetti, Aldo Rossi, Giotto Stoppino and Silvano Tenori. In the introduction to the catalogue they articulated some reasons behind their works:

This exhibition is born from the preoccupation of fixing new phenomenon...

The object seems to be trying to get out of a presumed distinctive reality [showing] an uneasiness of the function - from process. It tends to assume a greater emblematic function, to appear to have sentiments, [and] with passion, give a meaning to diverse contents.¹⁰⁶

The exhibition was staged against a rigid interior put together as a collection of single piece of furniture which gave the impression that the objects within it were interchangeable, and hence lacked all character. The young architect who rebelled against this uniqueness of the object, that for him lost in the end its expressive force, was proposing a way of reviving the ideologies that had risen in the late 1940s and early 1950s. A new search for the relative value of the object took place that rejected notions of taste, stylishness and consumerism. An attempt was made to re-place the furniture in its cultural setting and set it among other artefacts, thereby giving it an affinity with the work such as by Albin which had expressed a quest for the recognisable. For example, the use of natural wood as an expressive material, of cloth, frames in relief, and, the tendency to round off the edges of the pieces to enclose their shapes, rather than cutting them off sharply, were elements that allowed for the typical and at the same time, a novel interpretation. Temporariness and interchangeability (and, therefore, an indifference) of parts were contradictory

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¹⁰⁶ Cited from 'La Mostra «Nuovi disegni per il mobile Italiano» all «Osservatore delle arti industriali» di Milano' in *Casabella continuità* n. 239, 1960, p. 62.



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A black and white photograph of a wooden chair with a high back and a curved seat. The chair has a simple, functional design with a high, slightly curved backrest and a seat that appears to be made of a single piece of wood or a simple frame. The legs are straight and sturdy. The overall appearance is that of a traditional, possibly antique, wooden chair.

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Fig. 54.- 'Una mostra di mobile a Milano' *Domus* n. 367 (1960).
Reacting against a growing technology of fast-communication, these pieces of furniture returned to materials that were expressive in themselves and forms that recalled the notion of time - maintaining memory and history as building components.

notions in linking objects with the existing environment. There appeared a new active relationship with history as memory. Vittorio Gregotti later recalled in 'Italian Design 1945 - 1971' (1972) that the theory of reminiscence had used memory as a material in design as a defence against what was too new or disturbing.¹⁰⁷ It seemed that now in the early 1960s history was used as a tool against an invasion of a consumerist society, and a general inexpressiveness, just as when Rogers had strengthened the ties with history and tradition as a means of reacting against Fascism and to build on its solid grounds. In both cases history symbolised a moral act. It was a form of reaction that forced one to take sides. Reviewing the exhibition in *Domus*, Gillo Dorfles argued that one of the merits of the exhibition had been

... to stir up the stagnant water of furniture design, to touch on the sore point of imitations, by this time, the ab-originality of Danish and Finish types, and in addition, to set out for a indisputable sympathy for 'ornamental components', innate in the recent design activity.¹⁰⁸

If the necessity of ornamentation had to express itself, Dorfles continued, it should be up to the designers to discover it - as in the furniture by Gregotti-Menghetti-Stoppino, Umberto Riva and certain features proposed by Monti, Gae Aulenti, Asti and Favre. By observation, one realised that artistic conclusions could only be obtained by looking towards the future and not by turning to the past, however glorious it may be, or appear. The acceptance of furniture consciously addressing the upper level of the market, the 'ultra borghese' (to use Dorfles's term), raised questions about the validity of the signs used for communication. This was picked up in a criticism made by the English *Architectural Review*, which claimed that the "craze continues" and described the exhibits as, "plain common or garden *gusto milanese*, at its creepiest and worst" and continued,

... before throwing up his hands, laughing it off, or deciding that it can't happen here, the British reader might do worse than look up the 'how not to do' example that appeared in James Gowan's article on education in AR December 1959 (i.e. illus. 17 p. 319, or even illus. 35 p. 322) and ask themselves why a minority, but an intelligent, thinking, articulate, minority of younger architects is so determined to revive most of the things that modern architecture and industrial design are supposed to have buried for good.¹⁰⁹

It was quite clear from this comment that these young Italian designers were considered by the *Architectural Review*, to be making proposals quite

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¹⁰⁷ Gregotti, V. 'Italian Design 1945 - 1971' in Ambasz E. (ed.) (1972) *ibid.*, p. 328 - 329.

¹⁰⁸ Dorfles, G. 'Una mostra di mobili a Milano' in *Domus* n. 367, 1960, pp. 33-34.

¹⁰⁹ 'Neoliberty furniture' in *Architectural Review* vol. 127, n. 760, 1960, p. 368.

inappropriate for the contemporary scene. They approached the object from a non-technological side - neither interested in ways of assembly nor at the production line - and looked for the solution for an innovative result in "ornamental components" and tried to find new, yet inherent, properties within the material that provided the form with a freshness. The relationship between man and the object was fostered by, to use Gillo Dorfles's terminology, "an expressive form whose initial purpose has been that of signifying something, and not just with a simple functional commodity."¹¹⁰ The object represented part of society and history that became further displayed in the innate qualities of the material, modes of joining, juxtaposing unexpected elements, etc. Consequently, the focus was not made on the designer himself as an individual, rather he was part of that symbolism. The Italian designer had philosophical concepts that questioned the relationship between the single and the whole. Tradition, modernity, expression, and morality were concepts that weighed heavily on design thinking, not only in terms of the single object but rather as a notion of a physical environment in its totality. This sentiment was epitomised in Gregotti's editorial in *Edilizia Moderna*, n. 85, 1964 where he argued that

... a huge amount of objects of every size, whose only relationship is frequently merely of superimposition, forms our new, concrete landscape. They grow, multiply, are discarded and deposited in layers of refuse at the edges of our actions. They are more and more necessary for us, possessing us intimately.¹¹¹

Keeping within its ethical role, it seemed that the object managed to use the notion of history as a reaction against the overtly apparent consumerist culture in Italy which had diminished the value of the object in the sense of linking it with society and the citizen. With the architects such as exhibited at 'Nuovi disegni per il mobile Italiano', Italian design tried to recall the past by bringing memory back as a building component in defence to what was considered too unfamiliar or disturbing. In this way the 'object' was a sign of human existence that drew its content from a complex set of relationships between conceptual and physical conditions in the environment. Theory and practice were both equally significant in the creation of the artefact which hoped to have a lasting effect on its surroundings.

¹¹⁰ Dorfles, G. 'Structuralism & Semiology in Architecture' in Jencks and Baird (ed) (1969) *Meaning in Architecture*, p. 41.

¹¹¹ Gregotti, V. *Edilizia Moderna* n. 85, 1964.

Part 4

The Italian myth

This thesis has aimed to provide a theoretical explanation for 'italianità' by looking at a group of magazines published in Milan rather than basing it on lived experience. One of the reasons behind this lies in the fact that the magazines, *Casabella continuità*, *Domus* and *Stile Industria*, were spontaneous expressions of the contemporary ongoing architectural debate in the 'milanese' society. During the period of 1945 - 1964 they were also unique for Italy in their research into the human aspect of design which was intended for the whole of the built environment combined with their aim to reach a wide readership, including the citizen, architect and industrial manufacturer. Being sensitive in grasping the 'right moment' for developing ideas, their publisher's clear objective, Gianni Mazzocchi, was to educate 'good taste' and consumer culture which he did by dominating the publishing market in terms of the specific magazine culture in Milan.

Although different in their approaches towards the architectural project, the three magazines all considered culture to be building blocks that supported the idea of thinking about all artefactual objects together, regardless of scale. Whether an object or a building, a set of concepts delineated the design process. The whole of the city was perceived as a totality composed of smaller physical and conceptual elements that made up the whole. Similarly, the object's joints and the composition of materials reinforced and conceptualised the interrelationships that made up the city. Reduced to such a scale, the conception of the physical form revealed part of the structure of society. The designed object was, to an extent, the history of cultural evolution, questions and investigations, desires and ambition that were expressed through details and signs which people read, interpreted and in the end, possessed. This was a method for design that Rogers, Ponti and Rosselli proclaimed in their

magazines, a way of thinking that identified the practice of architecture as a manifestation of life. The three magazines drew attention to different aspects of the artefact, yet described it as one where all the content in which our way of life was rooted could be examined and where they were integrated and came together in a unity of the whole. The integration of contents was not simply a juxtaposition or an objective balance of the parts, neither was it something predetermined. Integration gave meaning and value to the unity of the architectural work, while at the same time, each part discovered, within the context of the whole, a celebration and clarification of its particular meaning. Working within the urban environment, the architect therefore had to establish a dialogue with the city in which the client and citizen would later participate. Publishing works by architects practising within this line of thought, the magazines were a vital source for linking the architectural practice with the life of the citizen, the citizen being primarily a member of the bourgeois class however. Rogers's democratic rhetoric of hoping to appeal to the whole of society in *Domus*, *la casa dell'uomo* and *Casabella continuità* had become a subject of scrutiny and he came to realise that his readers formed only a small section of society. Evidently, the effect of the architectural project depended on the consciousness of the architect and the participation of the user. T.S. Eliot's words in *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) could describe this commitment;

... it is only by an overlapping and sharing of interests, by participation and mutual appreciation, that the cohesion necessary for culture can obtain. A religion requires not only a body of priests who know what they are doing, but a body of worshippers who know what is being done.¹

If the consumption of an art or architecture is considered, by analogy, 'religion', then that religion not only had to be made, but also interpreted. The significance was to provide 'the worshippers' with the necessary appreciation of what was taking place, and the 'taste' to judge it. It was clear on the behalf of the editors of *Domus*, *Casabella continuità* and *Stile Industria* that their readers had to be observant and critical. The magazines presented a certain culture, a slice of society that the readers were part of and to a certain extent were expected to respond to by their way of life. That is, the acquired social status of the reader was acknowledged yet at the same time, he was expected to become more self-conscious and critical of his own existence, to develop his taste and understanding of culture. Within this context it is interesting to recall a passage written by the professor of sociology, Pierre Bourdieu in the 1970s, where he described the social domain of the home in this way:

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¹ Cited from T.S. Eliot (1958) *Selected Prose*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, p. 247.

What is acquired in daily contact with ancient objects, by regular visits to antique-dealers and galleries, or more simply, by moving in a universe of familiar, intimate objects 'which are there', as Rilke says, 'guileless, good, simple, certain', is of course a certain 'taste', which is nothing other than a relation of immediate familiarity with the things of taste. But it is also the sense of belonging to a more polished, more polite, better policed world, a world which is justified in existing by its perfection, its harmony and beauty, a world which has produced Beethoven and Mozart and continues to produce people capable of playing and appreciating them. And finally it is an immediate adherence, at the deepest level of the habitus, to the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias which, more than declared opinions, forge the unconscious unity of a class.²

In the case of *Domus* during Ponti's editorship, issues such as 'taste', 'harmony', and 'beauty' clearly addressed the bourgeois class and the education of taste. Designs were placed in the context of 'customs', 'civiltà' and 'collezionismo' as, for example, in the article 'Arte e qualità tecnica soli lussi ammissibili' (1948) where five concepts laid out indispensable precepts for achieving high standards of design. They were: custom (a social participation in the real 'civiltà'); arts (an expression of taste); quality of execution and finish (an expression or education of working); collection of works of art (participation in the display and organisation of culture); and technological experiments (participation in the civil progress which later would become custom).³ The 'lusso necessario' had been a subject of debate between Gio Ponti and Ugo Ojetti (who had suggested to Ponti he should establish the magazine *Domus* in 1928) in the inter-war period. In a letter to Ponti, 'Lettera a Giovanni Ponti sul lusso necessario' (1933), Ojetti concluded that in principle, the original, perfect, and expensive creations of the artist had always been luxury objects. Imitations and falsifications followed later. If the applied arts and Italian art were to be revitalised then this principle and framework had to be recuperated.⁴ A function of architecture was to provide a space, clean as a white page, where things were placed and composed representing the luxury of the privileged class and the taste of today, as well as offering a playful display on the walls. By means of the arts, the inhabitant, as represented in *Domus*, possessed innumerable and surprising elements that transformed, created, and illuminated their surroundings.⁵ Design understood

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² Bourdieu, P. (1994) *Distinction. A social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Routledge, London, p. 77.

³ Anonymous 'Arte e qualità tecnica soli lussi ammissibili' *Arredamento dell'arch*. Melchiorre Bega, *Domus* n. 226, 1948, pp. 52-53.

⁴ From Ugo Ojetti, 'Lettera a Giovanni Ponti sul lusso necessario', *Pegaso*, Gennaio 1933. Here cited from *Edilizia Moderna* n. 81, 1964. Il Novecento e l'Architettura. p. 31.

⁵ Anonymous 'Artigianato e arredamento' *Ceramiche e pareti in Domus* n. 227, 1948, p. 57.

as an expression of identity was extended by Ettore Sottsass in the article 'lussuoso e finito' (1954) published in *Domus*, where he argued that the symbolic value of expression did not always give a true image, richness was a myth.⁶ Showing off expensive clothing and jewellery expressed nothing other than a spiritual poverty, he insisted. Delineating this point Sottsass maintained that the symbol of richness was for Italians embedded in materials thus adding the symbol of labour (working hours) and perfect execution to the symbol of luxury. In Italy, one found the most beautiful windows, the most expensive and complex window frames. Wood was the most lucid, and oak was used in excess. Satin, bronze and luxurious materials were common and everything was exquisite, clean, brushed and glazed in order to impress, not least the wealthiest of foreign visitors. But, against this overabundance of richness, Sottsass asserted that the poetics of materials were not only in the most polished wood but also in the more delicate and immediate things, as for instance, in the Japanese house of wood and paper. What mattered was to make things with joy, un-restrained and with ease. To have emotions, in other words.

The controversy over the values of objects lay primarily in how they communicated, that is, the objects' signification, what concepts lay behind them, and what were their modes for representation. The editors of the magazines projected the artefacts according to their relationships with the themes and subthemes that the magazines represented and which added to the knowledge of the reader- themes such as celebrating 'continuità' for the city; 'collezionismo' within the home; cultural preoccupation enriching industrial product design. They established a discourse about the artefacts - objects, buildings, cities and urban planning - and communicated their message. Much emphasis was laid upon theory of design which provided a further signification for the form, elucidating meanings that were inherent in the architectural work and communicating them to the user. This direct pre-occupation with the user (his humanity and identity) was one of the hallmarks of Italian modernism. It was characterised by the need to work within the human scale of the individual and to place the architectural work within the context of his cultural and physical surroundings. The Italians wanted to create lasting design measured against the individual, his humanity and identity. This 'human' factor was the main issue that set Italian design against the modern architecture in Europe and America which promulgated technological progress or styling as primary factors for design and searched for absolute and universal values that could be applied in different countries regardless of context or the peculiar characteristics of the surroundings. What was particular to the Italian architectural discourse was to establish interrelationships between the human being and the city, home and the object. All these aspects were interconnected, not only between each other but also

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⁶ Sottsass, E. 'Lussuoso e finito' in *Domus* n. 301, 1954, p. 64.

Fig. 55a.- 'La sedia "superleggera" Domus n. 352 (1959).
A depiction of this chair by Ponti reinforces its unique qualities that had made it famous, its lightness, joints and transparency which here is demonstrated in the chair's figurative appearance.

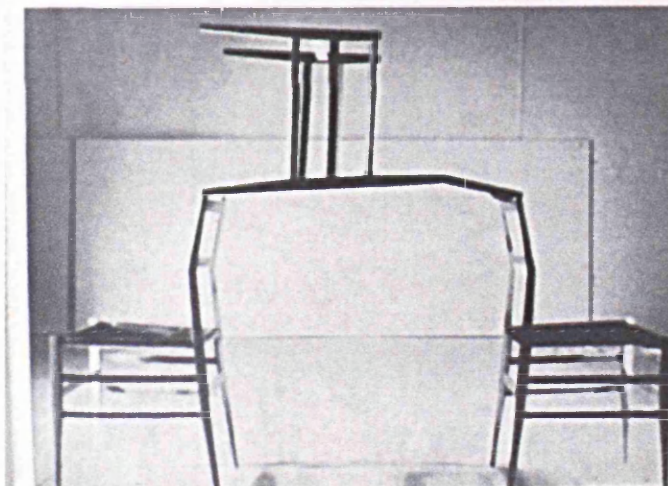
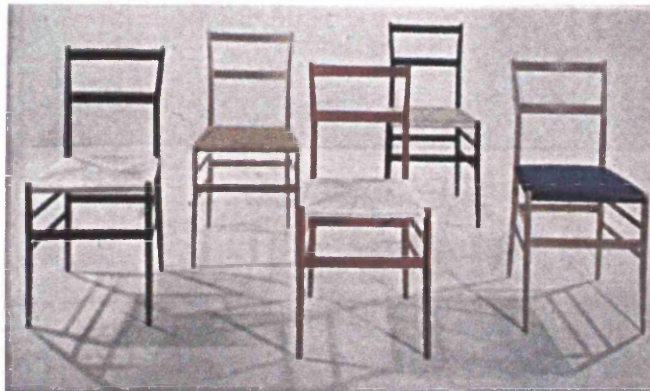


Fig. 55b.- 'La sedia "superleggera" Domus n. 352 (1959).



Fig. 56.- A child stacking chair by Marco Zanuso and Richard Sapper. Photograph taken from *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, edited by E. Ambasz.

The 'magical' quality of this chair lies in modes of joining; of joining its individual pieces into a whole and in joining up with the others. Thereby it encourages communication and interaction with the child's play.

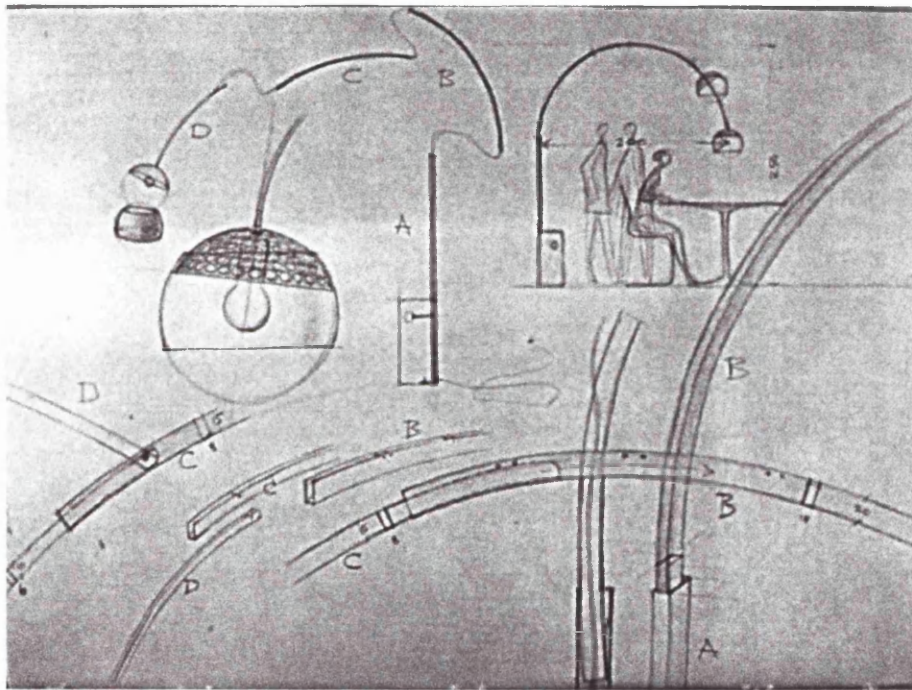


Fig. 57a.- The 'Arco' lamp by Pier Giacomo and Achille Castiglioni, 'Nuove lampade italiane' *Domus* n. 400 (1963).

The representation of this lamp expresses how it reached out into the proposed interior. Its powerful gesture makes the lamp part of the overall setting and in itself indispensable to it.

Nuove lampade italiane

di Mario Biondi e Wilton, con la collaborazione di Elio

Il nuovo design italiano, che si è sviluppato in questi anni, ha portato alla luce una serie di lampade che non solo sono funzionali, ma che sono anche un'opera d'arte. Le nuove lampade italiane sono state progettate da Elio Biondi e Wilton, che hanno creato una serie di lampade che sono un'opera d'arte. Le nuove lampade italiane sono state progettate da Elio Biondi e Wilton, che hanno creato una serie di lampade che sono un'opera d'arte.

Biondi, Biondi e Wilton, con la collaborazione di Elio

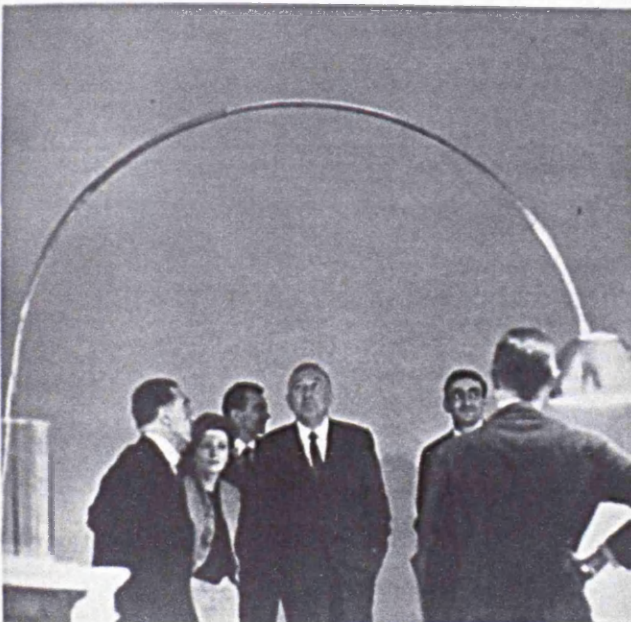
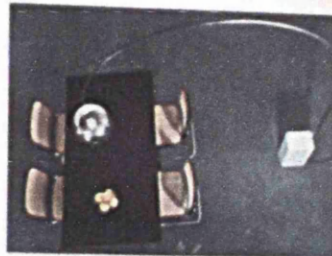


Fig. 57b.- The 'Arco' lamp by Pier Giacomo and Achille Castiglioni, 'Nuove lampade italiane' *Domus* n. 400 (1963).

between the constituent elements of which they were composed. This was one of the reasons why theory and practice were considered equally indispensable to the conception of the artefact. For the Italians the importance of theory served to create a field of signification necessary for the social existence of objects. It could therefore be argued that the Italian pre-occupation with semiotics, so fiercely debated in the 1960s (see in particular Manfredo Tafuri's writings), was an outcome of this. It was in a sense an attempt to deal theoretically with the role of 'theory', which was acknowledged to be an essential part of the world of making artefacts.

According to Rogers, no work could be considered modern unless it drew upon elements from the past and furthermore, Ponti and Rosselli felt artistic tradition and culture to be areas of knowledge that the architect could not avoid when thinking about a project. Drawing from these conceptions a fusion of arts, crafts and industry created a unique result for the artefactual object and made Italian design famous abroad. Architects, well established on an international level, created objects and furniture as expressive as, for example, Ponti's 'superleggera' chair presented in *Domus* 1959, a simple wooden frame and caned seat manufactured by Cassina. [fig. 55a,b] The chair was inspired by a traditional design made by the craftsmen of Chiavari, a fishing village near Genoa. It was praised for its logic, lightness and strength which was a result of a particular building technique (the fixed joint) and visual know-how (giving the image of lightness, elegance) as well as for its good finish and fineness.⁷ Another example was Kartell, the manufacturer of plastics, who apart from offering stylish domestic utensils, was increasingly producing luxury furniture, as for instance, the little polyethylene child's stacking chair produced in 1961 by Marco Zanuso and Richard Sapper. Available in orange, green, black and white, it was fabricated in a number of easily assembled moulded elements. The seat and back, striated to make the chair lighter and to give it some flexibility, were in one piece while the legs slotted on individually. The images of this chair as a representation of Italian design reinforced an impression of fantasy. They were stacked and composed as in a children's game, - a climbing frame rather than a object to sit on.⁸ [fig. 56] The third source for the burgeoning reputation of Italian designers was the Castiglioni brothers, Livio, Pier Giacomo and Achille, who worked together on a number of projects. The last two, Pier Giacomo and Achille designed the famous 'Arco' lamp for Flos manufactured in 1962 and presented in *Domus* 1963. [fig. 57a,b] It epitomised the way that Italian lights served both as a source of illumination and as a means of transforming an interior. The combination of traditional marble and glass with the highly modern steel,

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⁷ Ponti, G. 'La sedia "superleggera"' in *Domus* n. 352, 1959, p. 44.

⁸ See for example in Sparke, P (1988) *Italian Design 1870 to the present*, p. 132; Ambasz E. (ed.) (1972) *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, p. 44 and *Edilizia Moderna* n. 85, 1964, p. 60. The chair was a winner of the Compasso d'oro award in 1964.

chrome, and aluminium served to reinforce this message of a formalised and luxuriously modern setting. The strength of the dialogue between the materials was reinforced by the symbolism present in the marble; it represented grandeur and an Italian tradition of hospitality, its qualities were aesthetic (the beauty of the material, surface design, and exceptional proportions), practical (functional and durable), and, economical. As well, it had its own range of colours and was an honest material that did not pretend to be anything else.⁹

The space of the home was a site for diversity of expressions, where one could read from the objects different intentions, definitions, and effects, as well as diverse social and intellectual tendencies. Ponti had foreseen a kind of taste that exemplified the postmodern condition of the indefinite. He was sensitive to the pluralism at home that later defined post-modernism as "neither a homogenous entity nor a consciously directed 'movement'," in the words of the theorist, Dick Hebdige.¹⁰ Rogers, in his reading of the environment, was more concerned with working towards a classless society and to focus design, from the spoon to the city, on the human aspect of the individual regardless of his status. That is, to establish relationships between people and artefacts, to place things in context with one another and to look for the recognisable in the new. In that way, the whole of the built environment could be decoded in order to re-establish its meaning in a wider context. Roland Barthes's ideas of reading the environment through its signs and symbols, described in *Mythologies* (1957), provides an illuminating observation on this representation of artefacts in the magazines.¹¹ Barthes was concerned to show how all the apparently spontaneous forms and rituals of contemporary bourgeois societies were subject to a systematic distortion, liable at any moment to be de-historicised, naturalised, and converted into myth. He stated that "myth is a type of speech", a system of communication and a message. Everything could therefore be a myth provided it was conveyed by a discourse. Myth was not defined by the object of its message, but the way in which it uttered this message;

... it is made of a material which has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a

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⁹ For further reading on different qualities of the marble see; Anonymous 'Il marmo, materiale moderno' in *Domus* n. 282, 1953, and Anonymous 'Il marmo è colore' in *Domus* n. 285, 1953.

¹⁰ Hebdige, D. 'A Report on the Western Front: Postmodernism and the 'Politics' of Style' in *art in modern culture. an anthology of critical texts*. Edited by Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris. Phaidon Press. Open University, 1992, p. 331.

¹¹ Although *Mythologies* was originally published in 1957 in France, it was referred to in Italy by Franco Fortini in his above mentioned article 'Industrial Design' (1954) published in *Dieci Inverni 1947 - 1957*. The essays that make up the volume were written between 1954 and 1956 and were therefore known individually in Italy before the publication of the book.

signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance. This substance is not unimportant: pictures, to be sure, are more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or diluting it. But this is no longer a constitutive difference. Pictures become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful: like writing, they call for a *lexis*.¹² [Barthes italics]

The myth about 'italianità' was constituted not just by the artefact but by the manner in which it was mediated. In other words, Italian architecture and design was not just about designers creating things, it was also about the 'systems' through which they were represented to the world, which here in this thesis, has been argued to be the magazines *Domus*, *Casabella continuità* and *Stile Industria*. Projected as such 'italianità' was implicitly a 'milanese' phenomenon; in the city where many of the architects lived, their production was manufactured, published and discussed. The presentation of this myth took its form both in images and written texts. Objects and buildings were debated within a philosophical, sociological, poetical, artistic and technical context which was reinforced by the immediate legibility of the illustrations. The reader was offered a pluralism of expression which yet was highly controlled in terms of selection. The success of Italian design presented in the magazines can be described in the particular way in which the Italian architects managed to create a link between the environment and the individual, his city, home and objects. Shaped by the magazines, the architects' skills at welding together technology and the arts with popular and elite culture had never before reached the same level in design or architectural theory internationally.

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¹² Barthes, R. (1973) 'Myth Today' in *Mythologies*. Paladin Grafton Books, London, p. 119. For further reading see; Hebdige, D. (1989) *Subculture, the meaning of style*. Routledge, London. First published in 1979.

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